Who Benefits? Decentralised Forest Governance through Community Forestry in Nepal

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Old fashioned, centralised and bureaucratic systems of natural resources management have been blamed for the failure to conserve forest resources. Such arrangements are alleged to result in top-down decision making processes, low levels of community participation, and lack of transparency. These criticisms have led to claims that the devolution of forest management to the community will improve resource management and more effectively deliver sustainable development. The devolution from the state to local communities of natural resource management access rights has been an important policy tool for forest management over the last several decades.

This research examines to what extent, and how, decentralized forest governance delivers enhanced economic, social and environmental benefits. More specifically this study develops and tests a framework to assess how devolved forest governance performs across the indicators of participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. A set of policy relevant and locally applicable governance indicators was developed through a participatory process that involved a large number of stakeholders including CFUG members and policy makers. To explore this topic, the study combines a single case study of devolved forest governance in Nepal with a medium-n research design of perceptions of community forestry operations in nine community forest user groups from three districts representing three different Nepalese ecological zones. A purposive sampling method was used to select CFUGs with different characteristics and CFUG members' opinions were collected using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The study reveals that the key elements and indicators of governance are dialectically interconnected. Governance performance on one element and associated indicators shapes the

outcome of other elements and indicators. Community forests located in the Middle Hills and High Mountains regions of Nepal generally perform well across the various governance indicators used, while a lower level of performance was observed in Terai region. However the research finds that ecological zone is not a determining factor of good governance; instead, socio-economic factors are found to shape the success of community forestry governance and outcomes. In addition, the research reveals that external agencies actually enhance community forest governance and outcomes as a result of synergy, interaction and cross-fertilization of knowledge between community forestry participants, government officials and other stakeholders. It is also the case that the better a community forest is governed, the more it flourishes and the wealthier it becomes. However, the distribution of the wealth and capital generated by a community forest remains a concern as the benefits are not being shared with the wider community.

The research highlights the need to build the capacity of community forest users and, especially, to empower poor and disadvantaged people to ensure they obtain access to and are able to utilise the available resources. By developing an innovative framework to assess governance at local level, this study not only informs us about decentralised community forestry in Nepal, but the framework can also be utilised to assess community-based natural resource management initiatives in other developing countries.

Keywords:

Decentralisation, good governance, community forestry, community forest user groups, participation, transparency, accountability, Nepal

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CARE	Cooperation for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBF	Community Based Forestry
CBFG	Community Based Forest Governance
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CBOs	Community Based Organisation(s)
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CF	Community Forestry/Forests
CFM	Collaborative Forest Management
CFOP/OP	Community Forest Operational Plan/Operational Plan
CFUG	Community Forest Users Group
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPR	Common Property Resource
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDC	District Development Committee
DFO	District Forest Office/r
DFRS	Department of Forest Research and Survey
DoF	Department of Forests
DSCWM	Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management
EC	Executive Committee of CFUG
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal
FGD	Focus Group Discussion

FUG	Forest Users Group
FY	Fiscal Year
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Governance of Forest Initiative
GNP	Gross National Product
GoN	Government of Nepal
HDI	Human Development Index
HH	Households
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IDA	International Development Agency
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IN	Indeginious Nationalities
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation(s)
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LE	Life Expectancy
LRMP	Land Resource Mapping Project
masl	metres above sea level
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFSC	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation
MIGA	Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
MoPE	Ministry of Population and Environment
MPFS	Master Plan for Forestry Sector

MW	Mega Watt
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
NR	Nepalese Rupees
NRB	Nepal Rastra Bank
NSCFP	Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project
NUKCFP	Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project
PPR	Private Property Resource
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RECOFTC	Regional Community Forestry Training Centre
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RFD	Regional Forestry Directorate
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TU	Tribhuvan University
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
WB	World Bank
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

GLOSSARY OF NEPALI TERMS

Ban Janch Adda	Forest Inspection Office Birta
Birta	A grant of land to a noble as a reward for a service rendered to the state. This led to the emergence of Birta land tenure. It was usually both tax free and heritable, and had no set time limit. It was valid until it was recalled or confiscated
Dalits	Lower caste groups
Guthi	Endowment of land or other property for a religious or philanthropic purpose
Jagir	A grant of land to a government employee (civil or military) in lieu of salary.
Kipat	Ancient type of communal land tenure, applied to both cultivated and forested land. Under this system, a community had communal tenure. On kipat land, the community (community leader) used to give individuals the right to till certain areas and to collect forest products from other areas.
Mukhiya	Local leader
Muluki Ain	First legal code of Nepal promulgated in 1854 by order of the first Rana Prime Minister of Nepal
Rana	The hereditary dynasty of Rana Prime Ministers who ruled in Nepal from 1846 to 1950
Talukdar	Talukdar was responsible to collect land tax for the state and also had the responsible for controlling access to the forests and for distributing forest products. This position was abolished after the end of the Rana regime in the 1950s
Tamang	Ethnic group
Tole	The smallest unit of settlement: a number of toles constitute a village

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 BACKGROUND

The term ‘decentralization’ is central to community development and the transfer of power from central government to local people. Over the past few decades, decentralization of forest management has become a common policy in developing countries. Decentralization and devolution policies in forestry sector are purportedly aimed at increasing community participation in planning and decision making about forest resources affecting local livelihoods (Larson and Soto, 2008; Ravikumar et al., 2013). Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing interest, worldwide, in the potential of local participation in forest management to contribute to efficient service provision, environmental stability, and poverty reduction (Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). In order to improve equity and justice for community groups, international organisations, government authorities and civil society organization have now backed Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM). Many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America now claim to be decentralising at least some components of their natural resource management approaches (Larson, 2005). In many cases decentralization can improve financial and administrative efficiency, foster local-level democracy, and generate a more equitable distribution of benefits (the latter mainly promoted by international donors) (Conyers, 2003; Larson and Ribot, 2004; Resosudarmo, 2005). It can also promote the rights of local people (Larson et al., 2010), reduce costs and increase revenues (Colfer, 2005). While the decentralization of power to manage forest resources around the world is moving ahead at a rapid pace, the implications for forests and forest dependent communities can be positive or negative depending on how the decentralisation is occurring in practice (Colfer et al., 2008). In the Asia-Pacific region forestry decentralization

continues to be a work in progress and Nepal is a good example of forest decentralization through a series of Community Forestry (CF) policies and practices (Agrawal, 2010; Pokharel et al., 2012; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013).

1.2 COMMUNITY FORESTRY

There is increasing recognition in developing countries that forest resources cannot be sustainably managed without the active involvement of local communities. In recent years, a growing movement has emerged that addresses concerns about forestry management via the active involvement of local communities and other stakeholders and which encourages the sharing of indigenous knowledge and the benefits of the forests (Thoms, 2008). Nurse and Malla (2006) claim that at least 22% of the total forest area is being managed legally under community management systems in developing countries and this figure has increased in recent years. Although the concept and practice of community forestry (CF) emerged mainly in developing countries, there has been some diffusion to industrialized nations (White and Martin 2002). CF is a primarily a forest-based activity where the local communities have the fundamental role in protecting and managing forest resources either directly or through management systems that are accountable to the community through representatives selected by them (Wicklund, 1993; Agrawal, 2010; Pokharel et al., 2012; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). Nepal is considered as a global leader in CF (World Bank, 2001; MFSC, 2013). In most cases, local community groups will only manage their forests well if it is in their economic and social interests to do so (Roberts and Gautam, 2003). This means that the policies that are developed and the practices that occur must be community-oriented, with the community in charge of decision making and in receipt of most of the benefits (Brown et al., 2002). The

practice of CF, understood as the 'devolution' of power from forest agencies to the local community,[1] creates opportunities for poor and disadvantaged forest dwellers to participate in forest management. Properly managed, a forest commons can play a crucial role in delivering multiple benefits such as community cohesion, local livelihoods, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity conservation (Chhatre and Agrawal, 2008). CF essentially cuts across three layers of governance and operates at the (i) micro- (local, community) level; at the (ii) meso- (district or provincial) level; and at the (iii) macro- (national) level (Pokharel et al., 2002). Therefore, CF policy is a good example of decentralised forest governance.

1.3 DECENTRALISATION AND FOREST GOVERNANCE

Decentralization is often viewed as a potential means of promoting 'good forest governance' that is more participatory, adaptative, responsive, equitable and efficient to local needs, especially those of the poor and marginalised groups of society (Suryanta et al., 2003; Bene et al., 2009). An effective democratic form of governance relies on 'public participation', 'accountability', and 'transparency'. Participation is the involvement of citizens and stakeholders in decision making, either directly or through legitimate intermediaries representing their interests. Responsibility, on the other hand, is the requirement that actors occupying positions of authority account for their actions and decisions. Finally, transparency refers to the clarity and free flow of information enabling all members to access, understand and monitor processes, institutions and information. However, some scholars argue that active involvement of local communities is not always a prerequisite for launching a decentralization program (see Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001 for example). However, local

[1]The transfer of responsibility and authority over natural resources from the state to non-governmental bodies.

actors must be actively engaged once a program is launched. Suryanta et al. (2003) argue that rapid tropicaldeforestation and degradation in developing countries have compelled decision makers to adopt these policies, which are designed not only to protect the forest resource but also to support the livelihoods of local people. Decentralised and good forest governance are expected to make local communities and forest groups more independent and build their legitimacy – the latter considered a critical element to enhancing their governing capacity. However decentralisation does not always result in better outcomes and the policy is not free from criticism (Ravikumar et al., 2013).

1.4 RESEARCH RATIONALE

CF is now a widely researched and studied program including in Nepal and therefore a large literature is available dealing with various aspects of CF. Within this literature, the Nepalese model of CF is identified as one of the most successful government programs and Nepal is recognised as a global leader in community forestry (World Bank, 1999; Shreshtha, 2003). Despite many positive outcomes, however, CF in Nepal has faced increasing challenges, limitations and shortcomings, particularly in implementation and many of these issues are associated with governance (Bhatta and Gentle, 2004; Dhital et al., 2004; Maharjan et al., 2004; Pokharel and Niraula, 2004; Sharma and Acharya, 2004; Giri, 2005; Ojha et al., 2009; Maraseni et al., 2014). While it is evident from this literature that local communities are participating actively in protecting and managing forest, concerns have been raised that effective participation in decision-making is often lacking because those in charge do not represent the diversity of people's views or take them into account when making decisions (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001). These concerns generate several interesting questions. Are

communities empowered in CF? How are decisions actually made within CFs? Are participants treated equally? If not, what hinders participation? And perhaps most importantly, what are the necessary and sufficient conditions under which CF provides benefits to all members of a community?

Very few previous studies systematically document the diverse aspects of CF governance. Moreover, given the widespread occurrence of a number of challenges associated with CF governance, the literature contains many contradictions. These contradictory findings are summarised in Table 1-1, and indicate there is a clear need to examine in more detail how decentralised forest governance works on the ground.

Table 1-1. Potential positive and negative effects of CF

Criteria	Positive effects of CF on forest structure and the communities	Negative effects of CF on forest structure and communities
Participation	CF promotes participation and equity in management and use of forest resources through formalised policies to empower 'backward, poverty stricken, and women users'	Marginalised groups may not receive their legitimate share if CF is captured by local elites
Capacity	CFs demonstrate capacity to manage the forest, make decisions and obtain the benefits	Devolution does not mean that CFs automatically have the capacity to manage forest and reap the benefits
Benefits sharing	Despite differences in power, position, gender and/or caste, all users are treated equally and benefits are equitably shared	Rich, male CF members gain comparatively more benefits from community forests than poor and female members
Income generation	Special programs support the livelihoods of poor and marginalized groups	Forest dependent communities are marginalized and become even poorer
Transparency	Decisions to spend funds are made collectively and financial transactions are transparent	Only members of an elite make decisions and financial transactions are not transparent and revenues are misused
Forest management	Forests are better protected and managed for a diversity of values	Forests are converted to plantations to maximize market values resulting in a decline in biodiversity
Support from Forestry Department staff	Role of Forestry Department staff changes from policing to facilitating community forestry	Forestry Department has insufficient resources and capacity to support community groups
Empowerment and forest management	Local communities are empowered leading to improved forest management	Local communities are not empowered and there is no improvement in forest management
Access to basic forest products	Forest users obtain extensive and unimpeded access to basic forest products for their daily use	Forest users, especially the poor and marginalized, obtain limited access to basic products
Biodiversity	Community forests evidence improved overall forest condition including especially the maintenance of biodiversity	Community forests evidence an interest in commercial timber species and non-commercial vegetation is cleared which decreases structural diversity
Institutional innovation	Community forestry policy contributes to the creation of new, appropriate institutional structures at the local level that facilitates downward accountability	Institutional innovation does not occur and improved welfare of poor and marginalized group is generally lacking due to an absence of downward accountability

Sources: Shrestha, 1996; Baral, 1999; Paudel, 1999; Varughese, 1999; World Bank, 1999; Malla, 2000; Agarwal 2001; Ojha and Bhattarai, 2001; Ojha et al, 2002; Yadav et al., 2003; Adhikari et al., 2004; Pokharel and Nurse, 2004; Pokharel et al., 2005; Pandey, 2007; Khadka and Schmidt-Vogt, 2008; Ojha et al., 2009; Shrestha et al., 2010, MFSC, 2013.

A full account of the issues listed in Table 1-1 is provided in Section 3.2. They establish the context for the current research, which undertakes a detailed case study of devolved forest governance via CF in Nepal by examining the experiences of nine Community Forest User Groups (CFUG). CFUGs are community forestry membership organisations that are composed primarily of natural resource users.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central research question of this thesis is: does devolved forest governance via CF deliver an appropriate mix of economic, social and environmental benefits to local communities? To answer the question, a study is undertaken of devolved forest governance in Nepal, examining the state's forest polices, forest management agreements, decision making processes, the position of local communities and institutional arrangements. The study focuses on the relationships, rights and responsibilities of key actors and their perceptions of whether decentralised management of forest resources brings decision making closer to local people. More specifically, the study investigates whether community forest management is perceived to enhance the participation and representation of ordinary people and contribute to better livelihood opportunities and poverty reduction. It examines if marginalised groups are perceived to participate in CF constitutional and operational plan preparation and whether their voice is heard by elite community members.

Central research question

> To what extent, and how, does decentralized forest governance via CF deliver enhanced economic, social and environmental benefits to marginalized groups?

Supplementary research questions

Q1: Does decentralised forest management via CF enhance community participation including the participation of women and other marginalised groups? If not what are the barriers and how can these be overcome? To what extent are 'marginalised groups' involved in CF planning and decision making processes? How do they participate in these processes? (Chapter 5)

Q2: Are CFUG policies, procedures and activities transparent to all members? What can be done to enhance transparency in CFUGs? (Chapter 5)

Q3: How accountable are the actors that play a key role in managing CFs? Are they accountable to the users? If not, why not? (Chapter 6)

Q4: How effective is decentralised forest management in the form of community forestry in delivering economic benefits? What goods and services do people obtain from CF and, how do they make decisions to distribute these benefits? (Chapter 6)

Q5: To what extent is decentralised forest governance via CF efficient? (Chapter 7)

Q6: How fair or equitable are CF benefit sharing mechanisms? Do all members obtain benefits equitably? (Chapter 7)

1.6 ARGUMENT

Those favourably disposed to community forestry argue that a decentralised or devolved mode of governance that is closer to the local people and community groups contains a more effective set of checks and balances to limit the power of government officials and elites,

ultimately making them more responsive to local needs (Anderson et al., 2006; Colfer et al., 2008). If true, decentralisation in turn would contribute to equity and social justice, strengthen local participation, enhance efficiency and effectiveness, and empower local people (Burns et al., 1994; Turner and Hulme, 1997; Bergh, 2004). However, a review of the literature on the practice of decentralisation reveals varied outcomes as witnessed by an earlier wave of experiments with decentralisation in Africa and Asia in the 1950s and 1960s which is considered to have largely failed (Crook and Manor, 1998). Reports on the recent experience of other regions also detail mixed results. For example, as outlined in Table 1-1, the Nepalese case of so-called successful decentralised forest governance is reported to have delivered both positive results and key challenges (Pokharel et al., 2005; Pandey 2007; Khadka and Schmidt-Vogt, 2008; Ojha et al., 2009; Shrestha et al., 2010; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013).

Building on this literature, my central hypothesis is that the implementation of a policy of decentralization is never straightforward and that only rarely does it create the foundations necessary to achieve its purported efficiency and equity benefits. This is because, in many cases, decentralisation will fail to achieve the equal participation of local people, and poor and disadvantaged groups will be excluded from major decision making processes. In addition, my secondary hypothesis is that the various actors operating within state, market and civil society institutions (including NGOs and INGOs) that play a vital role in delivering CBF have divergent responsibilities to many different authorities and that this will lead to contradictory actions and results and ultimately to a reduction in the level of transparency and fairness. Overall, therefore, I hypothesise that while some aspects of decentralization may improve people's welfare by delivering more effective public services and reinforcing a 'good governance' approach to forest resource management, the net result of decentralization is, by reinforcing asymmetric local power relations, the achievement of the opposite outcome.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study combines a single case study of devolved forest governance in Nepal with a medium-n research design of perceptions of community forestry operations in nine community forest user groups from three districts representing three different Nepalese ecological zones. A purposive sampling method was used to select CFUGs with different characteristics and CFUG members' opinions were collected using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Full specification of research framework and research method is described in Chapter 4.

1.8 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

This first Chapter has provided the background for this research, including a statement of the research questions, arguments and methodology.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the concept of governance, good forest governance, decentralisation and their application to the forest sector and the various mechanisms employed for governing forest resources globally. The chapter critically reviews the key literature on the concept of forest governance, analyses the elements of good forest governance proposed by various international organisations, and argues that the putative benefits of good forest governance may not be delivered in practice.

In Chapter Three, I set out an overview of Nepal's political history associated with forest policy and management systems. The chapter commences by outlining Nepal's geography and its forest resources (size, type, location) and then provides a detailed account of the

evolution of forest policy in the country by describing key legislative milestones and regulations and their implications for the forestry sector. Building on this historical overview, the second part reviews historical and recent developments in decentralised forest governance in Nepal.

In Chapter Four, I outline the research methodology used to examine decentralised community based forest management of Nepal. I first review some conceptual underpinnings of governance associated with natural resource management particularly those related to community forestry. Secondly, I review the various good forest governance frameworks suggested by different groups and organisations and then develop a research framework to analyse how CFUGs are governed in Nepal. This research framework focuses on six key dimensions of governance: participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency and fairness. Next, I detail the method used to select my case studies. Finally, I discuss the research protocol, ethical issues, data collection and analysis and provide an introductory background to the next three analytical chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I investigate the degree to which devolved, decentralised resource management in the form of community forest governance has democratised forest resource access by examining participation and transparency (Chapter 5), accountability and effectiveness (Chapter 6), and efficiency and fairness (Chapter 7).

In Chapter Eight, I reflect on what has been learned about the status of community forest governance in Nepal and generalise the findings to community forestry elsewhere. Furthermore, I summarise the research questions, argument, and data, identify the broad opportunities and threats to the practice of community forestry, and point the way towards further research in this field.

CHAPTER 2: DECENTRALISED FOREST GOVERNANCE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Decentralised forest governance is considered key to the successful management of forest resources in developing countries (Agrawal et al., 2008; Petheram et al., 2004). Decentralized forest governance via community forestry has rendered policy makers, researchers and practitioners in the global South optimistic in achieving the twin goals of ecological restoration and poverty reduction (Dressler et al., 2010). Nonetheless, decentralizing forestry governance has not been straight forward, and in many cases has encountered difficult challenges (Phelps et al., 2010; Ribot et al., 2006). As a result, a vast body of literature has developed in favour of, or against, decentralized forest governance across the world.

This chapter reviews the concept of governance being used in the scholarly literature in general, and the ways it has been employed in community based forest governance in Nepal in particular. Firstly, the diverse definitions and concepts of governance are discussed and this is followed by an examination of the different governance classification systems proposed by various scholars and institutions. Secondly, the concepts of 'good governance' popularized by international donor organisations and financial institutions are reviewed to highlight the link between decentralization and good governance. Next, the chapter discusses decentralised environmental and forest governance before finally outlining the evolution of community based forest governance as a form of decentralized forest governance in both the South Asian and Nepalese contexts.

2.2 CONCEPT OF GOVERNANCE

The term ‘governance’ is relatively new but its meaning can be traced back to ancient times as ‘societies have always required some form of collective steering and management’ (Peters, 2002:1). Kaufmann and Kraay (2008) argue that the concept is as old as human civilization and trace its origin back to at least 400BC to an exposition on governance by Kautilya titled *Arthashastra*. Kautilya, who was believed to be the Chief Adviser to one of the kings of the Mauryan Empire (a region that that today covers much of modern India), recognizes the duty of the monarch as to protect the prosperity of the nation and its people (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2008). According to Kaufmann and Kraay (2008: 3), Kautilya presents three ‘pillars’ of the ‘art of the government’ emphasising ‘justice, ethics, and anti-autocratic tendencies’.

In another early usage of the term, the mid-fourteenth century Italian student of politics Lorenzetti considered governance important for the welfare of a country’s citizens. He describes good governance as occurring where men are working, others are cultivating, women dancing and children playing, and where integrity reigns in the beautiful city. Conversely, he describes bad governance as occurring in deserted lands where people are not working, and where violence occurs and women are abused (Kjaer, 2004).

In the early modern era, however, the concept of governance became fused with that of government with the latter emphasising formal political influence. The term ‘governance’ was not common during the post-World War II period (Kjaer, 2004). It is only in the past couple of decades that the term has been brought back in to refer to wide-ranging social systems of governing that include, but are not limited to, the narrower institution of government as the main decision-making political unit (Rogers and Hall, 2003).

The field of governance studies has become increasingly popular in recent years, and the growing amount of published literature published speaks to the growing interest in the subject (Klijn, 2008; Tollefson et al., 2012). The popularity of governance studies is not surprising as the conventional hierarchical models of government have been criticised of being heavily dependent on centralized 'command and control' regulation and limited role of local actors (Tollefson, 1998; Tollefson et al., 2012). Pierre and Peters note the key reason for the recent popularity of the concept of governances is 'its capacity – unlikely that the narrow term of government – to cover the whole range of institutions and relations involved in the process of governing' (Pierre and Peters, 2000:1). Proponents of alternative approaches to governance consider voluntary, community and market instruments such as certification and community-based resource management as key to secure the goals of sustainable management of natural resources (Tollefson, 1998; Cashore et al., 2001). However, others note that some kind of steering from the state is required to achieve the collective goals for society (Peters, 2002). Peters claims:

> The concept of steering is central to this discussion of governance, with the basic idea being that there must be some mechanisms for making and implementing collective goals for society (Peters, 2002: 3)

The concept of governance began to transform scholarly work in the areas of global associations, political science and public administration in the late 1980s (Gale, 2008; Tollefson et al., 2012). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Rhodes disputed the conventional model of 'top-down hierarchical state control' form of governance and proposed a 'model of public sector management' that reflected the reality that governments were progressively governing through networks (Rhodes, 1997). Using the British case, Rhodes describes governance as 'self-organizing, inter-organizational networks' that were characterised by interdependence, exchange of resources, competition and, most importantly, independence

from the state (Rhodes, 1997). Furthermore, Rhodes claimed that governance refers to a 'new process of governing' (Rhodes, 1997: 15).

Rhodes (2000) sets out seven definitions of governance: (i) corporate governance and (ii) good governance which emphasize formal processes of both private companies and governments for auditing, ensuring transparency, and information disclosure; (iii) new public management, which refers to improving efficiencies of government bureaucracies by introducing private sector management methods; (iv) new political economy, which emphasizes the changed relationship among the government, civil society and the market; (v) international interdependence, (vi) socio-cybernetic system , and (vii) network, which deny the existence of mono-centric power.

Since the early 1990s, the concept of governance gained importance as international institutions began to identify a 'crisis of governance' at the heart of the failure of international development to deliver economic growth. Most of literature on governance agrees that the distribution of authority across diverse authorities is not only more effective but also is also normatively better to centralised state control (Marks and Hooghe, 2000). Governance often relates to 'the broad social systems of governing' that comprises, but is not limited to, the narrower institution of government as the main executive political body (Rogers and Hall, 2003). In its broadest sense, governance has been defined to encompass the management of society and resources not by a single centralized authority but by the combination of agencies and institutions including state, civil society and private sector (Simonis, 2004).

Governance is defined by Mayers et al. (2006) as synonymous with 'government', an approach that others view as a 'conservative conventional approach'. In fact, 'government' is only one of the multiple actors involved in 'governance' and the others vary depending on the

level of ‘government’ being considered (Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). Over the last decade or so, the concept of ‘governance’ has gained a wider currency in a range of contexts within societies and organizations and taken on a much broader meaning. In this context, the word ‘governance’ is used to distinguish it from ‘government’ which is viewed as a form of hierarchical command (Gale, 2008). While there are many alternative conceptions to that put forward by Mayers and his colleagues, many scholars view governance as ‘the art of steering and coordinating the affairs of interdependent societies and organizations’(see also Bahr and Falkner, 2005; Gale, 2008; Tollefson et al., 2008).

Kjær (2004) explains the shifting dynamics of governance as being related to the formulation and implementation of public policy. She claims that governance is about ‘the setting of rules, the application of rules, and the enforcement of rules’ (Kjær, 2004). By adopting an institutional analysis approach, governance includes decentralization, privatization, and all the formal and informal modes of interactions and power relations between institutions and other actors (corresponding interplay), as well as between different levels of the same administration (determining interplay), and their respective roles in delivering effective and accountable collective choices.

James Rosenau sees governance as ‘rule systems’ where there are ‘steering mechanisms through which authority is exercised in order to enable the governed to preserve their coherence and move toward desired goals’ (Rosenau, 2004). For Rosenau, what differentiate government from governance are systems of rule. In fact, the governance can thus take many forms as “rule systems acquire authority in a variety of ways” (Rosenau, 2007:72).

Rosenau considers ‘governance’ to be a much broader conception than ‘government’ and he identifies a wide variety of stakeholders involved in global governance (Rosenau, 2002:80). These include:

(i) sub national and state governments founded on hierarchical structures officially adopted in constitutions,
(ii) for-profit global corporations formally hierarchically structured by articles of integration,
(iii) global governmental organizations based on formal treaties and charters,
(iv) sub national and national not-for-profit NGOs sustained by either formal laws or informal undocumented arrangements,
(v) international or transnational not-for-profit (international) NGOs either formally structured as organizations or informally linked together as associations or social movements,
(vi) markets that have both formal and informal structures that steer horizontal exchanges between buyers and sellers, producers and consumers

While all above approaches provide an important and interesting avenues of understanding governance from different perspectives, Peters’ approach—which links governance to government via public policy making – is used for the propose of this thesis. This is particularly important in community based forest governance where the local actors are managing their resources with support from government under certain policy and legislative framework.

Peters and Pierre (2006) describe governance as policy-related work that is interrelated with the political system and its environment. Pierre and Peters (2000) proposed two different approaches to governance - ‘the old or state-centric governance’ and ‘new or society-centric governance’. The former refers to ‘a steering conception of governance approach’ which is concerned with identifying the ‘capacity of the centre of governance to exert control over the rest of the government and over the economy and society’ (Peter, 2000:38). The latter approach looks at how the social forces are structured to channel the input into political processes and in implementation. The latter approach also questions 'how the centre of

government interacts with society to reach mutually acceptable decisions, or whether society actually does more self-steering rather than depending upon guidance from government, especially central government' (Peters, 2000: 36). This governance framework presents an important and interesting avenue for reframing the study of politics and policy-making. To this end, Peters' approach to governance is more balanced as it links governance with government via public policy making. Peters claims:

> Adopting the governance approach simply provides some standard against which to examine behaviour in the public sector, and analyse what has happened. The same type of analysis may be undertaken from other perspectives...but thinking about governance and governing makes the question of what has happened to policy ideas and proposals all the more evident (Peters, 2000:38)

Furthermore, Peters and Pierre claim that while for the majority of the past three centuries governance in the public realm has been associated with the state as a dominant pattern of hierarchical governing in which governments decide the laws and policies to be adopted, this traditional view of governance is being challenged by networks and other societal actors seeking greater autonomy (Peters and Pierre, 2006: 209 -210).

2.3 CLASSIFYING GOVERNANCE

The diversity of definitions and concept outlined in Section 2.2 shows that, although there is some agreement among the scholars about its core referents, governance is a highly contextual concept that encompasses a variety of processes and practices that vary considerably given the situation in which they are applied (Mossberger, 2007). Typically, when used in reference to the public sector governance focuses on being 'a mechanism for resolving public problems'. In contrast, when used in reference to the non-governmental

sector it focuses on ‘representing a variety of stakeholder interests’ (Lee, 2003). Even within these two sectors, the variety of mechanisms, interests, forms, functions and approaches may vary greatly from one organization to the other. Therefore when understanding, defining, classifying and applying concepts of governance, one operates in an area where ‘one size does not fit all’. This section outlines various modes and classifications of governance applicable to the natural resources management sector.

A complete and vital investigation of governance via public private participation (PPPs) is provided by Börzel and Risse (2005). According to them ‘PPPs are said to increase both the effectiveness (problem-solving capacity) and the legitimacy (democratic accountability) of international governance in terms of democratic participation and accountability’ (Börzel and Risse 2005: 195). Figure 2-1 provides a typology of possible combinations of governance arrangements with or without government. A balanced, public-private partnership is located at the centre while increasing private-sector autonomy is located to the left side of continuum (i.e., governance without government) and growing government autonomy to the right side of the continuum (i.e., governance by government) (Börzel and Risse, 2005; Börzel, 2010). The continuum can also be read as a depiction of the transformation of the state driven by privatization, deregulation and delegation of governance functions (Börzel, 2010: 9).

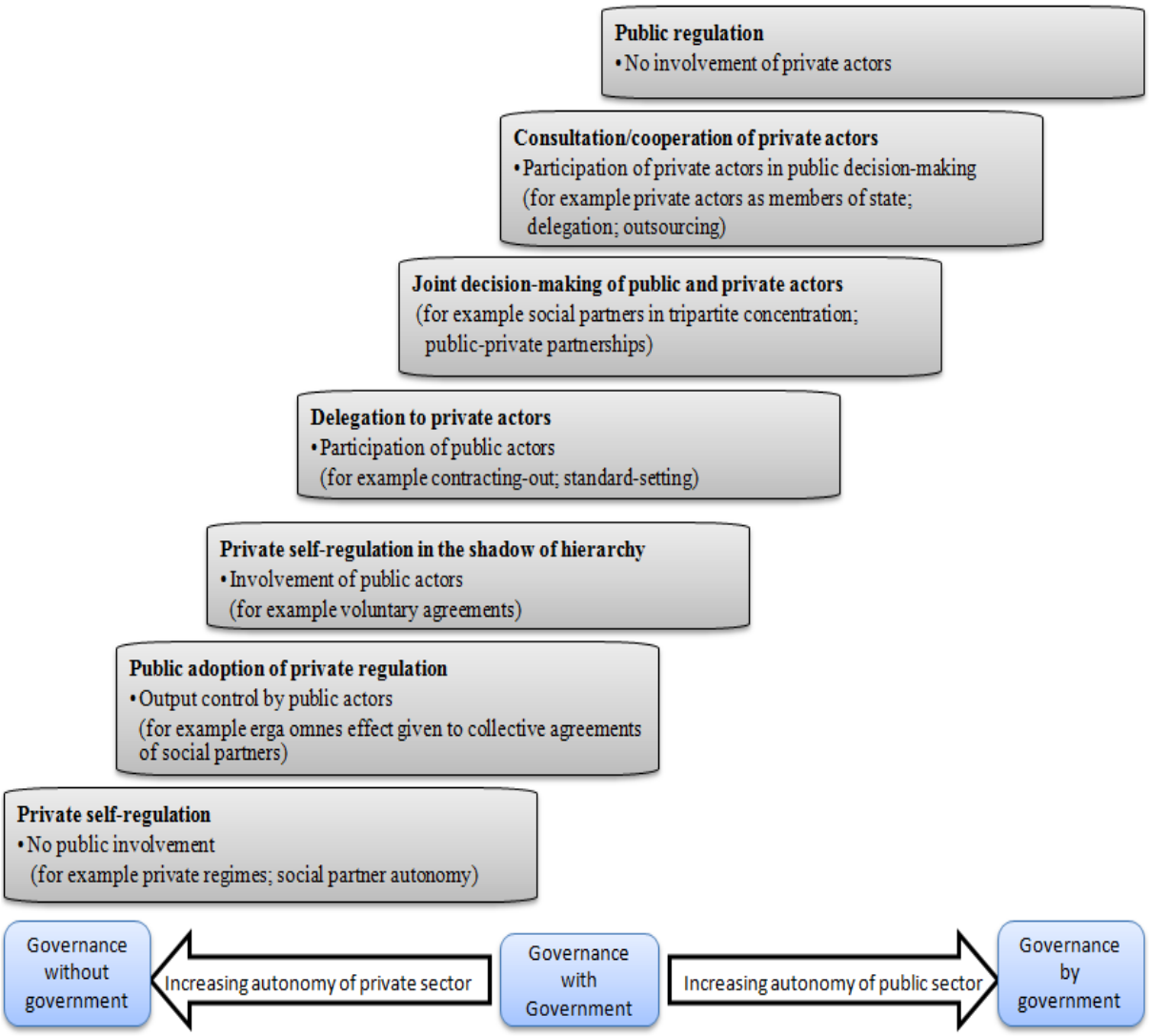


Figure 2-1.Governance with (out) government: the non-hierarchical involvement of nongovernmental actors (figure inspired by Borzel, 2010; Börzel and Risse, 2005).

According to Newman (2001), governance comprises various, multifaceted strands that involve concurrent upward and downward flows of power. He presents four different models of governance: hierarchical model, rational goal model, open system model and self governance model and these are briefly outlined below (Lee, 2003:6-7):

- the hierarchical model is characterized by centralization and stability, and emphasizes official power, regularity and responsibility;
- the rational goal model emphasizes decision-making authority, maximization of productivity and economic objectives;

- the open system's model is characterized by networks, and emphasizes flexibility and adaptation; and
- the self-governance model is characterized by devolution, and emphasizes citizen power, transference and participation.

This classification system provides an important avenue to understand multiple and complex systems of power which can be useful to understand the exercise of citizen power, devolution, participation and accountability in common pool resources management. Various other nomenclatures associated with the literature on governance can also be found and are elaborated extensively elsewhere. Some of these classification systems are outlined as follows (Lee 2003:7):

- advance form, participatory form, flexible form, and deregulation form (see Peters, 1996);
- administrative form, corporatist form, pro-growth form, and welfare form (Pierre, 1999);
- participatory governance models (Shannon, 2006; Fristch and Newig, 2009; Secco et al., 2011)
- bureaucratic form, business form, promote form, and complex form (Considine and Lewis, 1999);
- Privatization of services, contracting out, and necessary viable tendering (Andrew and Goldsmith, 1998).

Karen Mossberger outlined various forms of governance at local, regional and state level serving variety of purposes (see Table 2-2). In her governance models, the participation of stakeholders outside government is common, but not always a feature of these collaborative arrangements (Mossberger, 2007).

Table 2-1. Various forms of governance

Governance model	Purpose	Major participants
Collective management	Management as networking, collaboration	Inter-jurisdictional, cross-sectoral
Civic capacity	Policy networks	Cross-sectoral
Administrative, Conjunction	Administrative role in joint service delivery, other cooperation	Inter-jurisdictional, cross-sectoral
Rural regimes	Governing coalition, village wide agenda	Cross-sectoral
Hollow state	Contracting service delivery	Cross-sectoral (private non-profit)
New regionalism	Voluntary cooperation, policy issues and service delivery	Inter-jurisdictional, cross-sectoral
Other partnerships	May influence city agendas, development	Mixed, intergovernmental influence may be stronger

Note: This table is adapted from Mossberger, 2007

Pierre and Peters (2005) present a relatively simple but commonly agreed upon classification of models of governance relevant for the purpose of this thesis. They identify five models of governance based on 'how a governance system induces and responds to information from society and a systems capacity to respond efficiently to this information' (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 316-317). The five models are (i) Etatiste, (ii) Liberal-democratic, (iii) State-centric, (iv) Dutch governance school, and (v) Governance without government (see Table 2-1). The five models 'constitute a continuum ranging from the most dominated by the state (i.e., Etatist) and those in which the state plays the least role and indeed one in which there is argued to be governance without government' (Pierre and Peters, 2005: 11). The models are briefly summarised in Table 2-1 below:

Table 2-2. State and societal dominated governance models proposed by Pierre and Peters (2005)

State dominated models of governance	
Etatiste model	• the main actor in governance is government which has the power to take unilateral action and also to decide whether other actors are allowed to exercise power • state mostly relies on a competent bureaucracy to formulate and implement policies
Liberal-democratic	• state plays a pre-eminent role and determines which of actors it wishes to grant governance authority to • governments frequently have to rely on weaker, less-permanent bureaucracies and prefer to utilise parliamentary institutions as a substitute
State-centric	• the state remains the most important governing actor, but also establishes institutionalised associations with different non-state actors such as trade unions • strong state government sustains power while the institutionally integrated actors often acquire considerable stable organisation
Societal actors dominated models of governance	
Dutch governance school	• the state relies extensively on non-state actors to rule • Many actors take part in governance arrangements and the state is not automatically the most influential • a strong permanent bureaucracy is missing and actors make consensus-based decisions
Governance without government	• non-state actors are most influential and provide more authority than the state itself • the state simply provides an arena where other actors move collectively to make a decision and implement policies • system of government tends to be weak and lacks systematic authoritative capabilities

Table adapted from the text by Duit and Galaz (2008), Fazekas and Burns (2012: 25)

Duit and Galaz (2008: 317) point out that 'state-dominated models' outlined in the upper rows in the Table 2-1 are likely to provide 'relatively poor or potentially biased feedback due to distorted information flows from lower to higher levels'. In contrast, the 'societal-dominated models' are likely to 'suffer from information deficiency due to lack of incentives to provide information from societal interests' (Duit and Galaz, 2008: 317). The adaptability

of the former models is considered to be low due to information deficiencies while the adaptability of the latter models is assumed to be high as a result of organisational flexibility (Duit and Galaz, 2008). Berger (2003) sees a noteworthy role for governance within the practice of diversification of the rural economy. Both are interrelated and strengthen each other, predominantly by fostering rural growth. It has been argued that local communities know better than anyone else what their needs are and what has to be altered to secure their needs (Berger, 2003).

2.4 GOOD GOVERNANCE

The term 'governance' has been employed in a neutral, positivistic sense to refer to an approach that recognizes the existence of both state and non-state actors in governing both people and resources. Used this way, the term has no normative content. To use the concept normatively, some agencies and scholars have elaborated a notion of 'good governance'. When preceded by the adjective ‘good’, the concept of ‘governance’ acquires an evaluative aspect, and the term is normally used by bilateral monetary institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to decide which developing countries meet the requirements for debt relief and aid (Gale, 2008). Today, many scholars, policy and decision makers, aid donors as well as aid recipients are familiar with the ‘good governance’ concept which is now considered a key component of successful social and economic development (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2008). The concept of ‘good governance’ came to prominence in the field of international development in the late 1980s, when a World Bank-sponsored comprehensive study identified weak governance in many sub-Saharan African states as a cause of development aid’s poor performance

The World Bank defines good governance as:

> The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced, (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies, and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them (World Bank, 2007).

Despite being a recent term, ' good governance' has had a historical legacy particularly since the immediate aftermath of the World War II. The World Bank, formally known as International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), adopted the idea of 'good governance' in the sense of getting the government right. Following its success in funding Europe's post-war reconstruction, the IBRD started focusing on the developing world especially after the commencement of decolonisation in Africa and South Asia. With profits from loans at marked up rates, the IBRD usually financed large transportation projects with the aim of improving government, an aim that was similar to the contemporary sense of 'good governance'.

In 1956, a finance corporation was established to provide finance to the private sector. In 1960, the IBRD established the International Development Agency (IDA) to provide loans on favourable terms to developing countries. The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) offers political and non monetary risk assurance to private sector operators. The emphasis on improving governments in the developing world via institutional support, people's empowerment and improvement of service provision gave rise to the concept of 'good governance' in which the World Bank group played the lead role (Marcus, 2005; Wright and Stone, 2007).

This conception of 'good governance' has been criticised by many scholars, however, as 'a Trojan horse for liberal democracy' (Kirby, 2004, cited in Gale, 2008). Gale (2008) provides an example from Tasmania (Australia) of an environmental decision making process that fits the World Bank's concept of 'good governance' but which was nonetheless deeply contested by civil society organisations for its lack of transparency, participation and inclusion of science among others in the decision-making processes.

Most UN agencies use the concept of 'good governance' as synonymous with the concept of 'good government'. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997), good governance ensures that political and socio-economic priorities are based on a broad societal consensus and the voices of the most marginal and most vulnerable groups are heard in decision making over the allocation of development resources. Employed this way, the concept includes a number of essential elements such as reliable and equitable legal frameworks, political accountability, effective and efficient public sector management, bureaucratic transparency, participatory development and the promotion and protection of human rights (UNDP, 1997).

The UNDP's definition of governance also identifies three critical domains inherent to good governance--state (government), private sector and society-- which interact to deliver effective outcomes. Governance guidelines used by the UNDP establish that the function of the modern state/government is to create a political and legal environment that is conducive to economic growth; a private sector that is responsible for creating employment and income; and a society that supports social, economic, and political interactions – including encouraging groups within the society to participate in this interaction. The UNDP (1997: 2) views governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country`s affairs at all levels and asserts that good governance has nine attributes: (i) participation, (ii) rule of law, (iii) transparency, (iv) responsiveness, (iv) consensus

orientation, (v) equity, (vii) effectiveness and efficiency, (viii) accountability, and (ix) strategic vision.

Since the 1990s, the concept of 'good governance' has been put forward by organizations such as UNDP, World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a vehicle to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of aid in the developing world in an open, transparent, equitable and accountable way. To these organizations, the term represents responsible forms of government.

The Word Bank and other donors use good governance as a major theme for poverty reduction. Kaufmann et al. (1999) have categorised the main dimensions of good governance as following:

- the rule of law that includes protection of property rights;
- voice and accountability includes civil liberties and political stability;
- the lack of regulatory burden;
- government effectiveness, which includes the quality of policy-making and public service delivery;
- independence of the judiciary; and
- control of corruption.

The Asian Development Bank has identified that good governance comprises a number of elements such as, rule of law, public participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency, equity, professionalism and effective management service orientation, and monitoring of performance (ADB, 2004). Similarly, the African Development Bank (2010) clarifies its concept of good governance by identifying four key elements--accountability, transparency, participation, and predictability. The African Development Bank's definition addresses issues of participation of project beneficiaries and the group affected by project activities, the importance of improving the interface between the public and private sector, and the inclusion of the views of NGOs as important actors in development. According to the

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the best test of good governance 'is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of key human rights such as, political, civil, cultural, economic, and social rights' (UNESCAP, 2006).

In reflecting on these and other concepts of good governance, Simonis (2004) describes it as having at least three defining features: (a) it is normative, taking on the values postulated by the actors and agencies defining it; (b) it is based on mutually supportive and cooperative relationships between government, civil society and the private sector; and (c) it is defined by the possession of all, or some combination of participation, transparency of decision making, accountability, rule of law and predictability (Simonis, 2004).

In summary, therefore, some necessary conditions identified for good governance are inclusiveness, accountability, participation, rule of law, transparency, predictability, responsiveness, consensus orientation and strategic vision. Fairness or equity is often also included in the list of defining characteristics of good governance. Indeed, good governance is strongly associated with social justice and equity. It is often described as a mix of representative government and participative politics acting in the public interest. Governance is also considered 'good' when it allocates and manages resources efficiently, effectively and equitably (World Bank, 2009).

2.5 DECENTRALISED GOVERNANCE

For several decades, the idea of 'decentralization' of resource management has been a popular approach to increasing peoples' participation in decision making and forest management in both developing and developed countries. More than 60 countries around the world claim to have decentralized at least some aspects of their natural resource management (Agrawal, 2001). According to Manor (1999), about 80 percent of developing countries are now engaged in some form of decentralization. A popular argument in the political and social science literature is that decentralization brings natural resource management closer to the people and makes it more responsive to community needs (Colfer et al., 2008). There has been growing recognition that most of the resource management problems are a consequence of institutional malfunction and poor governance, and that decentralized governance is a pre-requisite for sustainable community development. Decentralization can be defined in various ways. Acccordign to Crook and Manor (1998), ' decentralization is usually referred to the transfer of powers from central government to local levels in a political, administrative and territorial hierarchy.'

Rondinelli and Nellis (1986:5) define decentralization from an administrative viewpoint as:

> The transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, area-wide, regional or functional authorities, or nongovernmental private or voluntary organizations.

In fact, successful decentralization involves devolution of decision-making to the community and a reconcentration of operational power to local level (Rondinelli, 1987). In this

connection, Ostrom et al. (1993, page) note delegation as “transfers of authority to public corporations or special authorities outside the regular bureaucratic structure”.

Most of the literature on governance agrees that the distribution of governance across various jurisdictions is not only efficient but also normatively superior compared to a central state monopoly (Marks and Hooghe, 2000). This is particularly important in the case of natural resource governance in developing countries as governance systems must operate at multiple scales in order to capture the huge variation in circumstances at the local level (Marks and Hooghe, 2003). On balance and within reason, the more decentralized the jurisdiction, the better is the capacity to reflect the heterogeneity of preferences that exist among the wide range of stakeholders. Majone (1998) claims that multiple jurisdictions better facilitate realistic policy commitments. Furthermore, multiple jurisdictions allow for jurisdictional competition (Frey and Eichenberger, 1999) which facilitates innovation and experimentation (Gray, 1973). This idea is further elaborated in Chapter 4 on the conceptual underpinnings of forest governance (Section 4-2).

2.6 ENVIRONMENTAL AND FOREST GOVERNANCE

The issues of environmental governance began to receive more attention after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, when Agenda 21 and other international environmental conventions and agreements emphasized the need for community participation in resource management systems (Karanja, 1998; Harman, 2005). Environmental management, as Rhodes (1997) has observed in the context of other policy sectors, involves ‘a collection of inter-organisational networks made up of governmental and societal actors with no sovereign actor able to steer

or regulate (Rhodes, 1997: 21)'. A key challenge for government is therefore to enable these networks and seek out new forms of cooperation so as to achieve particular policy objectives.

'Environmental governance' involves a more equitable distribution of power through institutional processes and structures for decision-making in natural resource management. It aims to empower stakeholders to ensure they have an appropriate level of rights in relation to the resources they are responsible for. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has defined environmental governance as:

> Environmental governance encompasses the values, rules, institutions, and processes through which people and organizations attempt to work towards common objectives, make decisions, generate authority and legitimacy, and exercise power (CIDA, 2006).

Although CIDA's conception regarding 'environmental governance' is comprehensive, as yet there is no definitive conception of 'environmental governance' (Gale, 2008). Indeed, a core strand of 'environmental governance' literature, for example, has framed the key challenge in terms of the requirement to balance opposing social interests (Hempel, 1996). Building on wider literature on environmental governance Gale (2008) defines 'good environmental governance' as:

> A set of transparent, accountable, open, balanced, deliberative, efficient, science-based and risk-based processes for steering and coordinating the affairs of interdependent social actors in the making of environmental decisions (Gale, 2008:268).

Gale's conception about 'environmental governance' not only covers the key elements of 'good governance' proposed by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund but also adds importance of science and risk-analysis in environmental decision making.

Over the last four decades forest governance has flourished; ironically however, during the same period the Asia-Pacific region has experienced some of the highest rates of deforestation and degradation in the world despite pressure from international conservation organizations (Dauvergne, 2001). Deforestation and forest degradation continue despite global agreements on forest protection. FAO (2001) states that during the 1990s, the world lost almost 10 million ha of net forest cover per year. FAO (2007) warns that the trend of deforestation is likely to exacerbate in the future with a higher rate of about 13 million hectares per year if business as usual continues. In developing and developed countries illegal logging affects the world's tropical and temperate forests, because of the total failure of forest governance (Higman et al., 2005). In recent years, there is a strong debate regarding climate change and the role of forests in combating climate change. Deforestation and degradation contribute 18% of global greenhouse gas emissions; however reversing this trend seems to be difficult due to increasing population and associated demand for food, fuel and forest products in developing countries.

Recent experiments associated with forest governance have resulted in a series of different but interrelated institutional forms. Those mainly applicable to modern forest policy are the following (Gluck et al., 2006):

- national forest programmes,
- international forest deliberations,
- decentralization,
- non-state market driven forest certification mechanisms,
- delegation of public rights, and
- self-organization.

Forest governance, or 'good forest governance', needs to address the issues of how forests are managed and the management challenges of illegal logging, corruption and a short-term focus on profits and jobs. Forest governance also includes issues such as how governments

and stakeholders make management decisions and who makes policy and law. Higman et al. (2005) describe good forest governance as transparent, equal and accountable decision making processes rather than traditional political structures of government. They describe forest governance as arrangements to inform forest managers about the practices of sustainable forest management. People's participation, accountability, rule of law, transparency and pro-poor policy change are considered as critical dimensions of good forest governance (Dahal, 2003). In many parts of the world local communities have practiced often self-regulated and task-specific governance to cope with locally explicit problems associated with common-pool resource (Ostrom, 1990).

A number of empirical studies demonstrate that the general principles for robust governance institutions for common-pool natural resources are well established (Diaz et al., 2003; Ostrom, 1990). Figure 2-2 outlines general principles for robust natural resources governance applicable to the forestry sector.

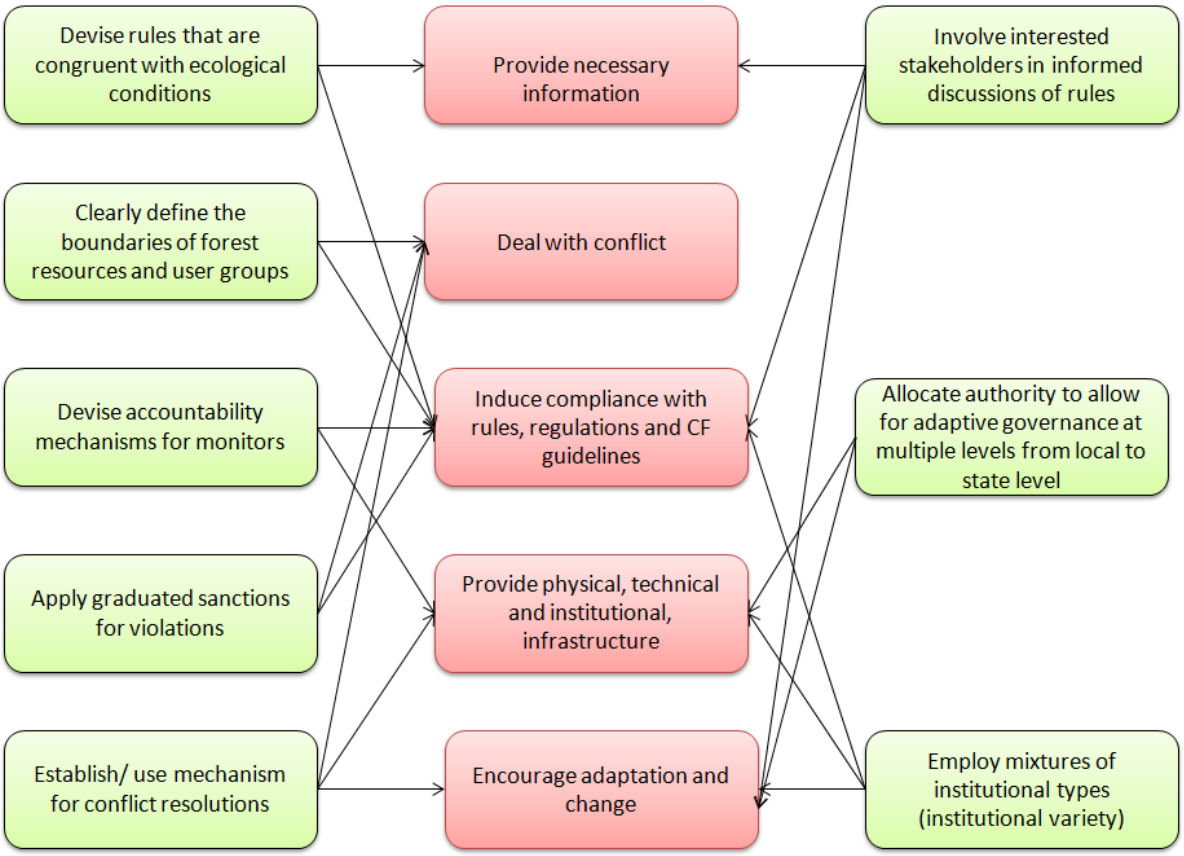


Figure 2-2. General principles for robust governance of forest resources in left and right columns and the governance requirements that they help address in centre column. Each principle is relevant for meeting several requirements and the arrows indicate some of the most likely connections (after Dietz et al., 2003).

2.6.1 GOVERNANCE VERSUS MANAGEMENT

The terms 'governance' and 'management' are often used interchangeably or sometimes misleadingly in forestry studies. Whether the concept of governance and management are completely different or complementary to each other is a contested issue. Some analysts argue that 'management' has to do with the resources and 'governance' has to do with the people or actors regulating the resources. However, this distinction is difficult to sustain as the terminologies like 'human resource management' and 'natural resource governance' are often encountered. Therefore, a black and white differentiation between the term 'governance' and 'management' is not possible. For example, while most of the literature on natural resources refers to 'natural resource management' or 'forest resource management', these terms imply the broader contexts, processes and outcomes about what happens in natural resources. The meaning of 'management' when used in this literature does not exclude the meanings associated with the concept of 'governance' as discussed above.

In many studies, resource 'governance' is considered to be the broader framework, encompassing resource management as a part or component within it. Nonetheless, there are also some other analysts who disagree that the concept of governance has the broader meaning and argue that power, governance and equity are all positioned within the framework of natural resource management (Blomley et al., 2009). Therefore, reaching consensus on the relationship between governance and management appears theoretically problematic. Instead of arguing about which encompasses which, this chapter uses the term 'governance' as a general term to refer to both people's management and resource management. Following this conceptualization, the term community-based forest governance (CBFG) will be used also as a substitute for the related term 'community-based forest

management' (CBFM) including in the historical contexts before the term 'governance' was coined.

2.6.2 FOREST GOVERNANCE AND POVERTY REDUCTION

In the 1970s, many development organizations realised that their policies and practices were not reducing the number of the economically poor; instead, their number was rising. While poverty reduction remains an overarching goal of international organizations such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and other similar organizations, how to achieve the goal remains contested. With regard to the poverty/natural resource management nexus, almost 1.6 billion people depend on forest resources for at least part of their livelihood. The local population living in rainforests in Latin America is 60 million, while developing country's population using trees on farms for food and cash is about 1.2 billion and 350 million people living on dense forest rely on them for life or income (World Bank, 2004). The World Bank/DFID (2006) estimates that one quarter of the world's poor population directly or indirectly depends on forests for their livelihoods. Like other sectors, forestry is not a magic bullet for poverty eradication, but with good forest governance, forestry can help to reduce poverty (IIED, 2002). The World Bank (2006) recommends strengthening national forest governance to improve the economic prospects of millions of poor people. On the one hand there is the question of vulnerability of forests or wood lands upon which 800 million poor people heavily depend for survival; and on the other hand, the rate of deforestation of five percent a decade is increasingly depleting this resource base, as well as contributing almost

20 percent of annual global CO_2 emissions and seriously jeopardizing biodiversity (World Bank, 2006).

2.6.3 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND FOREST RESOURCES

The future of the world's poorest people and of the world's forests are interrelated. UNDP's main development goal is to improve lives through poverty alleviation. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) established by the United Nations include the target to halve by the year 2015 the proportion of people who survive on less than $1 a day. While considerable improvements in human wellbeing have been achieved over the past two decades, there are still more than one billion poor people who lack essential services, making them vulnerable to a range of economic, environmental and social shocks (UNEP, 2007). A report by UNEP (2007) claims that many countries are unlikely to meet their 2015 MDG targets. According to the World Bank, more than 1.2 billion people, representing 28% of the global population live in extreme poverty and 90 percent of those living with severe scarcity rely on forests for their livelihood—a situation that increases the pressure on the world's forest resources. It is generally agreed that, to achieve sustainable development, governance arrangements must be integrated from the local to the regional and global levels, across a variety of sectors, and over a longer time frame for policy making (UNEP, 2007).

During the period 1990-2002 the rate of extreme poverty of those living on less than $1 per day dropped more rapidly in much of Asia than in Latin America and the Caribbean, while poverty rates remained unchanged in Western Asia and Northern Africa (UNDP, 2006). Again, in 2008, the UNDP reported that every night 850 million people go to bed hungry, which is due not only of lack of money but also a lack of access to essential resources,

including forests. To increase local food and forest security, and protect forests from outside violation, local people need tenure rights (IIED, 2002). Access to forest resources provides a vital cushion for very poor people by absorbing rural risk and reducing defencelessness. The Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002) both confirm the significance of good governance arrangements at local, national and international levels for sustainable management of forest resources (Brown et al., 2002).

2.7 PRINCIPLE INDICATORS OF GOOD COMMUNITY BASED FOREST GOVERNANCE

Nowhere is good governance more applicable than to community forestry (CF). The Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) has developed a list of seven key indicators of good forest governance (Table 2-1). Similarly, World Resources Institute (WRI) has identified five principles of good governance. Most of the RECOFTC and WRI principles are the same. In addition to these principles, the World Bank (WB) has added four elements: the quality of forest administration, the coherence of forest legislation, the stability of forest institutions, and the capability to manage conflict (Table 2-3).

Table 2-3. Main elements of good forest governance

RECOFTC	WRI	World Bank
rule of law	transparency	transparency
transparency	participation	accountability
accountability	accountability	public participation
decentralization and devolution	coordination	Stability of forest institutions and conflict management
participatory decision making	capacity	quality of forest administration
gender sensitivity, equity and balanced representation	-	coherence forest legislation and rule of law
-	-	economic efficiency, equity and incentives

Source: RECOFTC, 2001; WRI, 2009; WB, 2009

Most of the principle elements of good forest governance listed in Table 2-1 are relevant to community-based forest management. This is further elaborated in Chapter 4 under methodological framework (Section 4.3.1). Some important elements of community based forest governance are briefly described below. The indicators used to assess these key elements are outlined and justified in Section 4-3. These elements and indicators are then used to assess the performance of the nine case study CFUGs representing three ecological zones in Nepal (Chapter, 5, 6, and 7).

2.7.1 RULE OF LAW

The rule of law refers to 'a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced…' (United Nations, 2004). Good forest governance involves

the establishment of impartial legal frameworks. It also requires the complete safeguard of human rights, particularly those of poor and marginalised communities. The unbiased enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible forestry administration.

2.7. 2 TRANSPARENCY

Transparency denotes the visibility of decision-making processes, the clarity with which the rationale behind the decisions are communicated, and the accessibility of relevant information (Lockwood et al., 2009). Transparency ensures that the actions of governments and bureaucrats can be scrutinised by outsiders. Enabling access to information is crucial in order to ensure citizens are informed and engaged. Key attributes of transparency comprise the comprehensiveness, timeliness, availability, and clarity of information and whether efforts are made to ensure it reaches affected and vulnerable groups as appropriate (Nakhooda et al., 2007).

2.7.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is simply defined as ‘the obligation to answer for a responsibility conferred’ (Barrados, 2003 cited in Gale, 2008). This traditional but relatively straightforward definition highlights the ‘vertical’ dimensions of accountability upwards and downwards based on principle of delegation of authority (Gale, 2008). Accountability also comprises the extent to which there is clarity about the role that different institutions play in decision-making; that there is systematic monitoring of sector operations and processes; that the basis for basic

decisions is clear or justified; and that legal systems adequately uphold the public interest (Nakhooda et al., 2007).

2.7.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Arnstein (1969) claims that public participation is a redistribution of power that enables marginalized citizens, who are currently excluded from social, political and economic processes, to be purposefully involved in future programs. Effective participation can be understood as a process of empowerment of marginalised and disadvantaged groups (Khan, 2012). Free and fearless opportunity to participate in community forest planning and decision making processes is a key cornerstone of good forest governance. The form of participation can be either direct or through the involvement of genuine intermediary institutions or their representatives. Representative democracy does not necessarily mean, however, that representatives will always take account of the concerns of the most vulnerable people in society in decision making The core characteristic of good forest governance is broad-based participation that is ensured through the adoption of specific mechanisms that enable the effective participation of the very poor and marginalized groups. The continued existence of decentralized control over resources requires that active participation of local actors be ensured (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001).

2.7.5 INCLUSIVENESS

Every community's well being depends on whether its members feel that they are part of the mainstream community and have a stake in it. This requires that the groups, particularly the most marginalised and vulnerable, have prospects to improve or preserve their well being. Inclusive participation is especially important where there are historically persistent and culturally entrenched social and economic inequalities. Class, caste, ethnic group and patriarchy are some of the stratifications in society through which discrimination manifests itself in community. This understanding leads us to critically examine the structure and operation of the 'local community' to assess the nature of the participation that has become critical to forest governance programmes. The inclusion of the categories of gender and marginalised groups adds additional dimensions to those related to historical disadvantages.

2.7.6 EFFICIENCY

Efficiency in forest management is often referred to as the use of inputs such as time, money, labour, efforts, tools, technologies or infrastructures to achieve intended outcomes to the optimum level in a given context (Kao et al., 1993). It is a measurable or quantitative concept as opposed to 'effectiveness', which is a qualitative idea. Output to input ratio is the customary concept of measuring efficiency. However, 'efficiency' in line with the 'good forest governance' is more than simply the assessment of inputs and outputs in terms of money metrics. Particularly in CF, more intangible inputs, processes and benefits, such as community participation, decision making, cultural significance of forests and support to

livelihoods of forest dependent poor are also considered important in identifying 'efficiency' as one of the key aspects of good forest governance.

Decision-making processes often takes time and, if all things are equal, the shorter the time the more efficient the decision-making process is (Gale, 2008). Nevertheless, numerous factors hinder decisions being taken quickly. According to Gale (2008) key factors that affect the efficiency of environmental decision-making are: (i) the number of parties involved in the process; (ii) the amount of information to be assessed; and (iii) the seriousness of the risk of getting it wrong. Hence, in this study the more qualitative dimensions of the 'efficiency' of forest governance are considered, particularly the context in which CF is being practiced.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the concept of 'governance' was reviewed in line with how different global organizations are utilizing the idea in managing public resources. Following a review of the historical evolution of the concept and practices of governance, consideration was given to the neutral term 'governance' and the concept of 'good governance', the latter referencing more desirable governing process of people and resources. Decentralized governance was seen as a form of good governance and it was related to decentralized forest governance in the form of 'community forestry' (CF). Various elements of good governance applicable to CF were synthesized by reviewing literature, which will be helpful in developing some key criteria for understanding CF governance in Nepal. Further discussion of these approaches, and the similarities and differences between them, is elaborated in the section on methodological framework (Section 4.3.1). A wide range of indicators associated with these

elements are identified (Section 4.3.4) and these are employed to assess the governance performance of nine CFs located in Nepal's three major ecological zones (Chapter 5, 6, 7).

CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN NEPAL: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The evolution of community forestry in Nepal has a long history and has been influenced by a wide range of socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural contexts. This chapter reviews the Nepalese context within which the current CF policy and regimes are formulated. The interlinked socio-ecological-political system is analysed, and the strengths and limitations of Nepal's national forest policies and implementation guidelines, which influence forest governance, are identified and discussed.

The chapter starts with a brief description of Nepal's geography and key physiographic regions and then describes the state's demographic structure and societal characteristics (i.e., gender, ethnicity, caste system, poverty, land tenure and associated indicators). Next, it outlines Nepal's key forest types, and this is followed by a history of forest management and policy changes. Following this history, the key rationale behind community participation in forestry and various institutional arrangements and their roles in community forestry is outlined. In the next section, various modalities of community forestry are summarised and the political economy of the Nepalese forestry sector is discussed. Finally, the chapter ends with an examination of the social, economic and environmental benefits associated to community forestry and some challenges associated with CF are outlined.

3.2 GEOGRAPHY OF NEPAL

Nepal is a small, landlocked country located between China and India. The country is located between 26º 22' and 30º 27' North latitude and 80º 04' and 88º 12' East longitude (LRMP, 1986). Total land mass is about 14.7 million hectares (mha) and it is rectangular in shape extending from east to west (CBS, 2004). It is a diverse country stretching from the Himalayas in the north to the hot Gangetic Plains along its southern border. Rugged terrain (mountains and high hills) makes up 83% of the total land area. Altitudes in Nepal range from 66 metres above sea level (masl) in the South Eastern Terai to the 8,848 masl high peak of Mount Everest which is the highest peak in the World.

The country has five main physiographical zones which are almost parallel to each other, running from west to east (Figure 3-1). These are (i) High Himalayan (altitude above 4500 m asl), (ii) High Mountains (altitude ranging from 3,000 m - 4,500 masl), (iii) Mid Hills (altitude ranging from 1000 m to 3000 masl), Siwaliks (altitude ranging from 500 to 1000 masl) and Terai (below 300 masl) (MOAC, 2004; Malla, 2001). The major characteristics of each region, including area and percentage, are summarised in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Major characteristics including area and percentage of the physiographic regions of Nepal

Features	High Himalaya	High-Mountain	Mid Hills	Siwaliks (Churia)	Terai
Elevation	Above 4000 m	From 2200-4000 m. High relief 3000 m from valley floor to ridges.	From 800-2400 m. Relief 1500 m with isolated peaks to 2700 m	From 200-1500 m	From 66-300 m
Climate	Alpine to arctic (Snow 6-12 months)	Warm to cool temperate, alpine	Sub- tropical, warm temperate, cool temperate on high ridges	Sub-tropical (but warm temperate in higher hill spurs)	Tropical / Sub-tropical
Rainfall intensity	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
Geology	Gneiss, schist, limestone and Tethys sediments	Gneiss, quartzite and mica schists	Phyllite, quartzite limestone and islands of granites	Tertiary sandstone, siltstone, shale and conglomerates	Quaternary alluvium
Vegetation types	Open meadows and tundra vegetation	Fir, pine, birch and rhododendron forests	Pine forests, mixed hardwood and oak forests	Sal forests, mixed hard woods and pine forests	Sal forests; mixed hardwoods
People/ Ethnic groups	Temporary herders Sherpa and Bhotiya	Khas Chetri, Tibetan related groups - Thakali, Bhotiya, Sherpa, Tamangs, Ghale	Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Newar, Brahmin, Chetri, Damai, Sarki, Sunar, Kumal, Rais, Limbu.	Tharus (dun valley) presently all hill tribes displaced/ immigrated from middle mountains	Tharus, Brahmins, Chetris,

Source: Table adapted from the FAO, 2008

The five physiographic regions can be reclassified into three basically different ecological zones. These are Terai (which includes Siwaliks), Mid Hills, and High Mountains (which includes High Himalaya) (See Figure 3-1). About one-third of Nepal's total area is forested,

21% is covered by cultivated land, and seven percent is non-cultivated land. Similarly, about 23% of the total area is covered by shrubs, grasses and pastures (DFRS, 2001). By ecological zone, Mid-Hills has most of the forests (about 26%), followed by Terai (8 %) and High Mountains (1%) (DFRS, 1999).

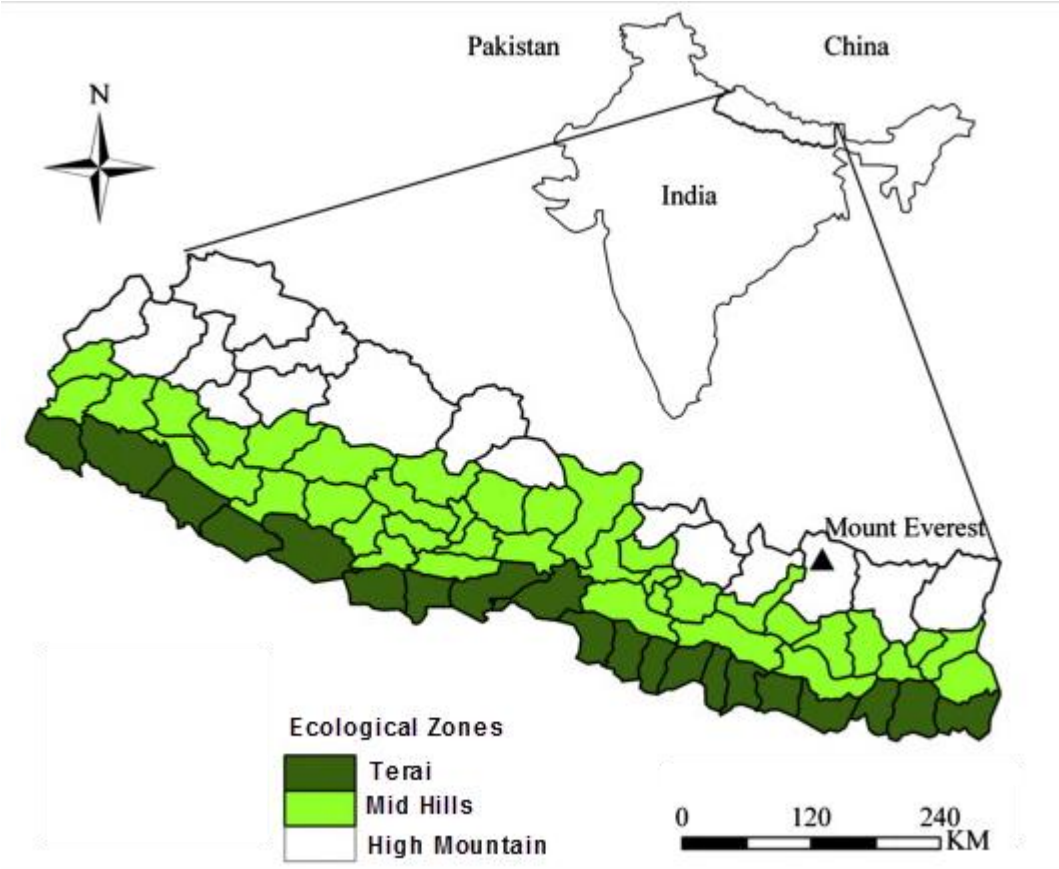


Figure 3-1. Map of Nepal showing location between in India and China and the three major ecological zones (Figure source: Chhetri et al., 2012, *Applied Geography*)

3.3 DEMOGRAPHY

The population of Nepal is 26.5 million, with an average family size of 4.9 and an average population density of 180 per square kilometre (CBS, 2012). The male and female population is 12.8 million (48.5%) and 13.6 million (51.5%), respectively. The population growth rate is

1.35 % per annum (CBS, 2012), which means it is projected to rise to 45 million by 2050 with continued pressure on natural and built resources.

Nepal's population structure is unusual, as approximately 40% of the population is below 15 years of age and seven percent of the population is above 60 years of age (CBS, 2002, 2004). Also, the population distribution in the three different ecological zones is very unequal. The High Mountain region contains approximately 7% of the population, although it occupies about 35% of the country's land; in contrast approximately 43% of the population lives in the Mid-Hills region covering approximately 42% of the total land area. The Terai region, which occupies approximately 23% of the total land, supports the remaining 50% of the population. According to the 2011 census, 83 % of the population live in rural areas (CBS, 2012).

The Terai emerged as an agricultural and industrial centre only after the eradication of malaria in the 1960s and its development is challenging the traditional economic and cultural centres located in the Mid-Hills region. There has been a large influx of people migrating from the Mid-Hills to the Terai region over the past 50 years. However, more than 40% of Nepal's population still lives in the Mid-Hill region. Both land productivity and access to markets are limited in the Mid-Hills due to its rugged topography where subsistence farming is the main economic activity. Consequently, the majority of the people depend on the forests, using its produce for fuel for heating and cooking, and for agricultural inputs such as fodder and leaf-litter for animal bedding and composting (CBS, 2012).

3.4 STRUCTURE OF NEPALESE SOCIETY

Nepalese society is heterogeneous with a complex mixture of various ethnic groups overlain by deep disparities in socio-economic and political opportunities. The country's social

structure and stratification is based on the hierarchical arrangement of various social classes, caste systems and strata (Abercrombie et al., 2000). The caste-based social structures and cultural practices contradict the newly emerging democratic and egalitarian norms and values adopted by the state, but these structures are deeply rooted in the past over at least three millenia (Gurung, 2005). The prevalence of castes, untouchability, the unequal status of women, and the gap between rich and poor have retarded the country's development and further entrenched economic disparity (Pradhan and Shrestha, 2005).

Based on the power relations in terms of access to different assets and services, the citizens can broadly be divided into two groups: marginalized and elites. Unlike the conventional Marxist division between the rich and the poor based on who controls the means of production, the inequality in Nepalese society is more complex in terms of caste, gender, ethnicity, class and region.

The marginalized groups, which are also described in various terms such as 'oppressed', 'disadvantaged' or 'exploited' groups have been constitutionally and legally recognized to be specially treated for their equitable upliftment and entrenchment into the mainstream. These groups are 'women', 'indigenous ethnic groups', '*Dalits*', '*Madhesis*', religious minorities and all those who live in the remote area in the north-west part of the country (GON, 2007).

Women in general, regardless of their family backgrounds, are marginalized or disadvantaged due to their far less opportunities in education, paid employment, right to property, political leadership and social status in comparison with their male counterparts. Women make up nearly 51 per cent of the total population, but only eight per cent of them have land holding entitlements due to a patriarchal tradition in which land and other properties are formally owned by the male members of the family (Gurung, 2009). Their representation in the civil and other government employment is below 10 per cent, while the percentage of women in

the Legislative Parliament is below 20 per cent despite the official commitment of the state that at least 33 per cent of these institutions would accommodate women. Thus the women are one of the disadvantaged or marginalized groups in Nepal.

Indigenous ethnic group is another community, which is considered marginalized in the country. There are two broader ethnic groups in the country, namely Indo-Aryan language speaking Caucasoid group and Tibeto-Burman language speaking Mongoloid communities. The latter are called the 'indigenous' groups or communities, since they settled in the country much earlier than the former. These indigenous groups altogether make up nearly 35 per cent of the total population, but they are disadvantaged in terms of economic capabilities, political power, level of education and access to various resources and services due to the dominance of so called high caste groups, such as Brahmin and Kshetriya, who have held the major high ranking positions in bureaucracy, judiciary, military, police and political leadership (Gurung, 2009; ILO, 2005). Gurung (2009) contends that various development programs, such as land reform and protected area systems have further marginalized the indigenous communities by depriving them off their access to land and other natural resources. Although the individuals of these indigenous group are scattered across the country, there are some pocket areas where certain indigenous groups are in the majority. For example, the Sherpas are mostly found in the high mountains, whereas the Gurungs mostly live in the western Mid-Hills. There are 62 indigenous communities identified in Nepal and they are considered marginalized or disadvantaged people (World Bank and DFID, 2006).

Dalits make up another marginalized group. The term *Dalit* literally means 'oppressed', 'suppressed' or 'downtrodden' group, which can operationally be defined as an 'untouchable' caste (ILO, 2005). They are referred to as 'untouchable' in a sense that the so called high caste people do not eat the food or drink the liquid touched by the individuals belonging to this group. Dalits have suffered from this 'untouchability' tradition for generations since it is 'one

of the fundamental discriminatory practices committed against the *Dalit* people' resulting in their low social status and traditional occupations often detested by so called upper caste people (ILO, 2005:7). The Dalit group compose nearly 13 per cent of Nepal's population (NNDSWO, 2014). They are divided into Hill *Dalits*, who are originally from the mountain and the Terai *Dalits*, who are from the plain region of the country. They are basically artisan people by occupations. The major Dalit groups include *darji* (tailers), *kami* (blacksmiths), *sarki/chamar* (cobblers) and *gaine* (singers).

The *Madhesi* population, who originally come from the southern plain region. is also considered marginalized in Nepal. These are people have a language and culture similar to the people in adjacent territory in northern India. They are, at times, called 'Indian-migrants' and treated as 'non-Nepali', although they have Nepalese citizenship (Dahal, 1983; Nayak, 2011). Their presence in the civil service is very minimal in comparison with the people from the mountain since the state favoured the latter for education, political empowerment and military service over time. The overall education status of the *Madhesi* people is far below the average, whereas their economic status in general is poorer than the average status of the mountain people (Gurung, 2009).

The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 and other laws have adopted a 'positive discrimination' policies for the upliftment of these marginalized populations. Reservations have been provided for these groups in order to increase their representations in bureaucracy, military services, police force and the parliament.

While discussing 'marginalized', it is relevant to talk about 'elites' as well. The terms, 'marginalized' and 'elites' are relative in the given time and contexts. In Nepalese contexts, economically wealthy, well educated, upper caste and males are considered 'elites', as opposed to those who are economically poor, uneducated, indigenous people, *Dalits*,

Madhesis and women, who are normally considered 'marginalized'. The 'elites' and 'marginalized' populations have exploitative relationships with the cultural power balance strongly in favour of the former despite the recent constitutional and legal reforms for the inclusion of the latter in economic, social and political processes (Gurung, 2009).

Since at least 1814, Nepalese society has been based on hierarchical legal structures that exclude the ‘lower’ castes, women, ethnic communities, and non-Nepali speaking communities from state administration and land ownership (Bistha, 1991; Pradhan and Shrestha, 2005). These structures include Hindu religious law and, increasingly, customary law. As a result several ethnic groups have been subject to significant discrimination by the elites and so-called high caste groups (Pradhan and Shrestha, 2005). In fact, societal domination by small groups of people is a common phenomenon in many social systems, which is known as ‘elite orientated social stratification’ (Bottomore, 1964; Coleman, 2001).

While a recent declaration of the recalled Parliament in May 2006 and the Interim Constitution of Nepal clearly state that ‘no person shall, on the basis of caste, be discriminated against as untouchable’ (UNDP, 2008), in fact ‘untouchability’ and ‘discrimination’ are still alive in practice which effects the participation of *dalits* in community forestry.

3.5 FOREST TYPES OF NEPAL

In Nepal, forestry is a predominant land use with 4.27 million hectares of the total land area (29%) covered by forests and an additional 1.6 million hectares area (10.6%) covered by shrub land (DFRS/FRISP, 1999). The distribution of natural vegetation is greatly influenced by climate, and the effects of altitude, temperature, rainfall and aspect are significant. The

large variation in altitude, temperature, rainfall and geology enriches Nepal with a high level of biodiversity that includes 75 vegetation types and 35 forest types (FAO, 1999b). As a result of these factors, the country is divided into broadly parallel zones that range through different types of vegetation to permanent snow on the one hand and that vary in ecological diversity from tropical forests to alpine tundra on the other.

Jackson (1994) classified Nepal's vegetation into six different types based on climate and altitude. Similarly, Dobremez et al. (1972) classified Nepal into four domains and 11 sub-levels, which provide six vegetation categories based on altitudinal classification (bio-climatic zones), which identifies 118 distinct ecosystems in Nepal. Furthermore, Stainton (1972) classified Nepal's forests into 35 different vegetation types and ten major forest types. Based on his previous vegetation classification framework, Jackson (1994) set out what is now a widely accepted account of Nepal's forest types and this is presented in Table 3-2

Table 3-2. Major Forests Types of Nepal

Major Forest types	Elevation	Detail forest types
Tropical forests	below 1000 m	1. *Shorea robusta* Forest 2. *Acacia catechu-Dalbergia sissoo* Forest 3. Other riverain Forest 4. Grassland and *Terminalia-anogeissus* Deciduous Hill Forest
Sub-tropical forests	1000 - 2000 m	5. *Pinus roxburghii* Forest 6. *Schima-castanopsis* Forest 7. *Alnus nepalensis* Forest 8. Riverain forest with Toona and Albizia species
Temperate forests	2000 - 3100 m	***Lower temperate 2000 - 2700 m*** 9. *Quercus leucotricophora* and *Quercus lanata* Forest (Oak) 10. *Quercus floribunda* Forest 11. *Quercus lamellosa* Forest 12. Lower temperate mixed broad leaved forest with abundant lauraceae 13. *Pinus wallichiiana* Forest (Lower type) ***Upper temperate 2700 - 3100 m*** 14. *Quercus semecarpifolia* forests 15. Upper temperate mixed broadleaved Forest 16. Rhododendron Forest 17. Upper temperate coniferous Forest
Sub-alpine forests	3000 - 4200 m	18. *Abies spectabilis* Forest 19. *Betula utilis* Forest 20. Rhododendron Forest 21. *Juniperus indica* steppe 22. Caragana steppe
Alpine forests	up to 4500 m	23. Alpine forests

Source: (Table summarised from the text by Jackson, 1994: 119 - 124)

Forests have tremendous economic and social importance in Nepal. Besides their ecological benefits, forests are the main source of livelihoods for rural poor people. More than 90% of the people use wood fuel as a source of energy for everyday cooking and heating. More than 80% of Nepalese depend on agriculture for their livelihood, which is interconnected to forest resources and livestock through fodder, leaf litter, soil retention and organic matter. The Nepalese agriculture sector contributes nearly 34% to the country's gross domestic product, with forests' direct share estimated at about 15% (IIDS 2014). In addition to forests' contribution to the economy through agriculture, its importance in ecotourism, forest-based enterprises, watershed conservation, green economy and climate change mitigation is also

significant. Socially, the forestry sector has contributed to creating inclusive institutions through various community-based forestry organizations. The inclusion of socially and economically marginalized communities as well as women in forestry groups has played an important role in enhancing the capacity of these social groups to challenge the social and gender discrimination they experience (LFP, 2004; NSCFP; 2007).

3.6 HISTORY OF FOREST MANAGEMENT AND POLICY IN NEPAL

Nepal's forest management system has evolved over some centuries and reflects policies that favour the ruling elite (Gilmour, 1988; Guthman, 1997). These policies included land grants favouring elite members of the society such as, high caste, educated, wealthy peoples. They continue to influence land tenure arrangements and associated socioeconomic characteristics. More specifically, Nepal's forest policy and management approaches have changed considerably since the beginning of twentieth century (Gautam et al., 2004). Over the past hundred years various forest policies were formulated and legislative provisions were made to resolve the perceived problems associated to forest management (Gautam et al., 2004). Based on the history of forest management in Nepal, Hobley (1996) identified three major phases of policy change. These were (i) era of privatisation (before 1957), (ii) era of nationalisation (1957 – 1978), and (iii) era of populism - decentralization and community involvement (1978 – now). The evolution of Nepali forest policy and its impact on forest management are summarised in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3. Historical Change of Forest Policy and their Effect in Forest Management

Year	Policy/Event	Significance /impact on forest management
Prior to 1950	i. distribution of national forest to *Rana* family members as *Birta*;	i. forest land use change from forest to agricultural land use
	ii. planned logging and Terai forest clearance along the Indian border for the intention of settlement, and	ii. revenue generation to the state
	iii. traditional management system (group efforts) *Talukdar* practice in the hills	iii (a) protection of forest land iii. (b) fulfillment of basic forest products such as fuelwood, fodder and household construction
1957	Private Forest Nationalization Act	haphazard cutting of forests conversion of private forest into farmland in the *Terai* plains
1961	Forest Act	classification of forest into various categories Forestry officials empowered
1967	Forest Conservation Act (special Forest Management act)	legal powers to forestry officials Law enforcement power reinforced
1976	National Forestry Plan	acknowledgment of people's participation in forest management
1977	Amendment of Forest Act 1961	concept of village *Panchayat* Forest Provision of *Panchayat* Forest and *Panchayat* Protected Forest
1978	*Panchayat* Forest (PF) and *Panchayat* Protected Forest (PPF) Regulation	transfer of national forest to village *Panchayat*
1982	Decentralization Act	formal acknowledgment of rights of local people for forest management authority to district and village *Panchayat*s promotion of users' committee concept
1987	Revision of PF and PPF Regulation 1978	earnings from *Panchayat* Forest and *Panchayat* Protected Forest channeled back to the concerned *Panchayat*s
1989	Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS)	•iInitiation of a program approach in the forestry sector • provision of users' committees for forest management • detailed planning and vision developed for each aspects of forestry development

Year	Policy/Event	Significance /impact on forest management
1993	Forest Act	• level of quasi-judicial power of forestry officials reduced. • CFUGs empowered for management of forest resources. • act oriented towards people-centered management
1995	Forest Regulations	Legalization of the procedure of CF • procedure of CF outlined • forestry staff's task changed from custodial to facilitator
1999	Revision of Forest Act, 1993	• power mechanism for breach of operational plans by FUG members developed • provision for spending the FUG fund in a variety of development activities
2000	i. Revision of CF Directives, 1994 ii. Revision of MPFS, 1988 iii. Government decision on new concept of forest management in *Terai,* Inner-*Terai* and Siwalik regions	i. prerequisite for obligatory inclusion of growing stock of CF and annual allowable cut in operational plans ii. joint management of state forests on the basis of the landscape planning approach iii. a) managing of degraded and open forest areas in the *Terai* and Inner-*Tera*i regions iii. b) conservation of Siwalik forests
2002	Leasehold Forestry Policy	condition of basis for the transfer of national forests to the private sector in the form of leasehold forests
2004	Herbs and Non-Timber Forest Products Development Policy	emphasis on commercial production of non-timber forest products including medicinal and aromatic plants from forests including community-managed forests for biodiversity conservation, local livelihoods and forestry sector contribution to national economy
2008	Initiation of carbon forestry	Submission of Nepal's Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) for REDD+ funding to Forest Carbon Partnership facilities of the World Bank Nepal selected for REDD+ in 2010 preparation of various studies and baseline scenarios to be completed by 2014 various piloting projects initiated in community forestry clusters to develop distribution mechanisms of REDD+ money to local people engaged in forest management different governance indicators at local level being tested for fair and equitable distribution of REDD+ money
2012	President Siwalik Conservation	all the Siwalik range (outer Himalayan range) declared a 'protection zone' under 'President Siwalik Conservation Programme'. Community forests located on the Siwalik hill required to amend their operational plans to ensure the conservation guidelines outlined in this programme are met.
2014	Chure and Siwalik Conservation area	Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation recently declared Siwalik area from east to west and formed a special committee for further planning and management.

Source: Summarized from the text (Kanel, 2007; MFSC, 2013; Pokharel et al., 2008; Ojha et al., 2009). For Nepali terms see Glosssary of Nepali terms in p. xxii

3.6.1 ERA OF FOREST PRIVATISATION (BEFORE 1951)

The era of forest privatisation is generally considered the period of pre-Rana and Rana regime in Nepal. Prior to the 1769, Nepal was divided into many small kingdoms and different forest management systems were adopted in different kingdoms. There was a little concern about forests because of small population and abundant resources. Most of the forests were state-owned but people were allowed to collect forest products under certain rules and regulations (Tiwari, 1990). For example, *Kipat* system was one of the ancient and traditional land holding systems that existed in Eastern Nepal. Under the *Kipat* system the forest resources were managed collectively within a community and the members of other communities via payment of fees or other commodities to the owners of the forest (Arnold and Campbell, 1986; Tiwari, 1990).

After the unification of Nepal in 1769, various form of forest management systems were practiced by the Nepalese feudal rulers i.e., *Shah* and *Rana* dynasty. Some noticeable systems of forest management were *Talukdari*, *Birta*, and *Jagir* (see also Table 3-3). The feudal rulers encouraged people to convert hill forests into agricultural land use to increase revenue through land taxes which was known as *Talukdari* system. *Talukdars* (village headmen selected by the *Ranas*) had the responsibility to control the resources and collect the revenue.

From the late of 1920s, and with the help of skilled British foresters, the cultivated area was extended by clearing some forests and extracting wood in other forests to sell abroad to India to collect revenue for the Terai region (Joshi, 1993). In addition, large areas of forests were given to members of the *Rana* family as *birtas*, and to influential and powerful officials as *jagir*. Incomes from the forests under these tenures flowed to the owners of such lands rather

than the state. It was estimated that by 1950 approximately one third of total forest area was under *birta* tenure, which was owned by the Rana family (Joshi, 1993).

3.6.2 ERA OF FOREST NATIONALISATION (1951 – 1976)

The era of forest nationalization occurred between 1951 and 1976, which was also a period of political turmoil in the country. The government nationalised all private forests in 1957 through the *Private Forest Nationalisation Act* (PFNA) with aim of protecting them from indiscriminate use by a few elites (Talbott and Khadka, 1994). The main aims of privatisations were, (i) to avoid the destruction of forests, and (ii) to ensure sufficient protection, maintenance, and use of privately owned forests. Many analysts argue that the PFNA generated controversy and debate that further fuelled deforestation and ruined the indigenous forest management systems (e.g., Hobley, 1985; Messerschmidt, 1993). However, others argue that nationalization was essential to ensure that Rana rulers did not continue to exploit the Terai forests for their own purposes (e.g., Joshi, 1993). The positive result was to establish a separate ministry, the Ministry of Forestry, in 1959 and to expand the government's forestry capacity. However, the government was not able to limit the deforestation that was occurring due to lack of manpower and access to remote villages. According to Joshi (1993), the government lacked capacity to take over the management responsibilities vested in it by the PFNA.

Comprehensive forestry legislation in the form of the *Forest Act 1961* (hereafter the *Act*) was promulgated in 1961 and many changes were enforced after democratic government gave way to authoritarian rule in 1960. The *Act* strengthened the Department of Forests' capacity to control deforestation by clearly dividing forests into diverse categories, defining the duties

and power of the forest department, clarifying forest offences, and arranging penalties. In addition, the *Forest Protection (Special Provision) Act* (FPA), formulated in 1967 to support the 1961 *Forest Act*, provided for stronger penalties for destructive acts or the removal of forest products from state forests. These two acts, however, ultimately proved unsuccessful in protecting the forest as a result of poor enforcement (Gautam et al., 2004). The major drawbacks of the two acts were that they only focused on the sale of forest products, on prohibition and punishment, and on organizational changes, rather than on giving priority to sustainable forest management and the needs of the people. Many plans were prepared at the district level but were never implemented (Joshi, 1993).

At the same time, the eradication of malaria in the Terai created serious pressure on the region's forests as a result of natural migration on the one hand and the government's resettlement programs on the other. In spite of government policies to control forest infringement and prevent deforestation for other non-forestry uses, the clearing of forests for resettlement programs continued. By implementing the policy in this way, many regional migrants were encouraged to engage in illegal incursions in the hope of getting land that was cleared and cultivated registered as personal property (Wallace, 1981).

3.6.3 ERA OF DECENTRALIZATION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION (1976 ONWARD)

The devolution and decentralization of Nepal's forestry sector started when the country launched its first National Forestry Plan (NFP) in 1976. The Plan introduced the community participation approach in forest management (Gautam et al., 2004) and was considered a stepping stone to decentralized forest governance in Nepal. This paradigm shift in Nepalese forestry was due to the influence of the discourse of participatory development on the one

hand and international concern over the theory of 'Himalayan desertification' on the other (Ojha et al., 2008). The government identified the need for public participation as a solution and recognized that local communities were legitimate actors in forest management after longstanding failures to combat deforestation and to restore denuded hills (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991). The following turning points in forest polices are recognized as major milestones in decentralised forest governance in Nepal in this period.

3.6.3.1 STAGE OF LEARNING AND POLICY CREATION (1976 TO 1988)

The 1976 NFP recognized the role of local peoples and specifically emphasized their involvement in forest management for the first time, a recognition that resulted from the Ninth Forestry Conference of 1974 (Pokharel, 1997).The *Forest Act 1961* was amended in 1977 and made provisions for both Panchayat Forest (PF) and the Panchayat Protected Forest (PPF), both new categories of forests to be managed by local communities, religious institutions and individual peoples. Forest Regulations for PFs and PPFs were enacted that formally allowed village panchayats to manage barren or degraded lands for forest production in 1978. These amendments to the *Forest Act* and Regulations signaled a major shift in Nepal's forest policy and a milestone in forest management with the government realizing that forests could not be managed without the cooperation of local people (Shrestha, 1996). Resource development through reforestation and afforestation projects was the focus of the government and donor agencies during this early stage of participatory policy creation. Therefore, the involvement of community in forest management was limited to the planting and protection of forests to meet the government's project objectives (Collett et al., 1996). However, despite good will, the partnership between government and village panchayats was

not especially effective during this period for a variety of reasons (Pokharel, 1997). Subsequently, therefore, a Master Plan for the Forestry Sector was initiated, which paved the way for the country's current strong national policy of community forestry.

3.6.3.2 STAGE OF CONDUCIVE LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION (1989 – 2000)

The enactment of the Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS) and decentralized forestry legislation (Forest Act, 1993 and Forest Regulations, 1995) are major events of this period for paradigm shift in forestry sectors of Nepal.

The MPFS was approved by the government in 1989 for a 25-year period. It established private and community forestry as one of the six most important forestry programs in the state and made provision to shift forest access and managing rights to local communities. The Master Plan provided the framework for developing policies for managing the country's forest sector, with the aim to mobilize, conserve and manage forest resources in a sustainable way and thereby maintain a balance in the demand for and supply of forest products, create income and employment opportunities within the sector for poor and marginalized households, promote people's participation, enhance productivity, and develop appropriate land-use plans (MPFS, 1988). The Plan recommended the establishment of Community Forestry Users Groups (CFUGs) as a suitable local institution for management of local forests and the development of an operational forest management plan by communities as a precondition to handing over forests. The MPFS also proposed handing over all available hill forests to local communities based on their willingness and capability to manage them (Bartlett, 1992; Gautam et al., 2004).

Based on the provisions of the MFSC 1989 and *Decentralization Act 1982*, the promulgation of *Forest Act 1993* and *Forest Regulation 1995* was a breakthrough for community forestry in Nepal. These two pieces of legislation provided a legal basis for the implementation of community forestry by establishing CFUGs as legal entities and classifying government forests into five sub-categories. These were: leasehold forest, government-managed forest, community forest, religious forest, and protected forest. The new laws established a CFUG as a self-governing, autonomous body with the rights to manage and use the forest according to an approved management plan. An amendment to the Act in 1999 made it compulsory for a CFUG to invest at least 25% of its income in forest management. The CF program proved very popular and one positive effect was its significant expansion in terms of both spatial coverage and number of forests handed over to local communities. Most of these community forests were in the Mid Hills region. Past studies, however, reveal that there is a great deal of unevenness in the success of community based forest management programs across the country. For example, the community forestry program has been far less successful in the Terai in comparison with the Mid Hills (JTRCF, 2001). Furthermore, despite making progressive provisions toward decentralization and good forest governance, several gaps and inconsistencies in the Forest Act of 1993 have been identified, such as: forest user groups are given only usufruct rights; and forest ownership is retained by the state (Dahal and Chapagain, 2008; MFSC, 2013).

3.6.3.3 STAGE OF EMERGING NEW ISSUES (FROM 2000 TO PRESENT)

The revised forestry policy of 2000 coupled with the emergence of strong civil society and various development issues in forestry sector, such as forest-based poverty reduction, climate

change, multi-stakeholder concept and good forest governance were noticeable as landmarks in the forestry sector after 2000. However, retrogressive activities were started in decentralized forest governance at central level in order to recentralize the devolved authority from the local communities (Dahal and Chapagain, 2008).

The Forest Sector Policy 2000 saw the government return to the conservation agenda of the past and insert obligatory provisions for CFUGs to pay 40 per cent of their earnings from timber sales to the state (Kanel, 2006). The policy also curbed the right of local communities with regard to CF management. The government imposed other restrictions on CFUGs. For example, it barred forest products from removal, even for subsistence requirements, unless a forest inventory to assess annual growth had been made and the CFOP revised. A separate policy also emerged in 2000 for the Terai, Inner-Terai, and Churia forests, which restricted CF in low lands. This policy stated that adjoining large blocks of forests were to be managed as state forest under a joint management agreement while unproductive lands, shrublands and inaccessible forests were to be managed as community forests (HMGN, 2000). The new policy created a rift between government and civil society, with the latter arguing strongly against the policy. They argued that the new policy discouraged CFUGs in their attempts to protect the country's forests and demanded that the government pull back. Many scholars also have criticized the new policy (Mahapatra, 2001; Malla, 2001).

The emerging conflict was compounded due to shifting attitudes to community forestry in the forest bureaucracy. Notably, there was a strong resistance to handing CFs in the Terai back. The Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) constantly opposed the government's plans and demonstrated with a big rally in favor of community forestry. During this period donor agencies and their project officials focused on issues of discrimination against marginalized communities and lobbied for the equitable and fair representations of these communities in community forestry user groups (MFSC, 2013).

3.6.3.4 SUMMARY ISSUES AND OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN VARIOUS TIME PERIOD

Another way of explaining and evaluating the history of community forestry in Nepal is to divide it into the following five phases based on the issues confronted: experimental, first generation, second generation, third generation and fourth generation. Table 3-4 summarises the phases, issues and outcomes and clearly demonstrates the gradual change in key issues associated to community forestry in Nepal. In early 1980 the focus was on trialing various mechanisms of community participation in forest protection whereas more recently the focus is on global warming, climate change adaptation mechanisms and payment of ecosystem services.

Table 3-4. History and evolution of community forestry in Nepal

Phase	Key Issues	Major Outcomes
Pilot/experimental phase 1980s	Trials across different projects of user group forestry, including work on participatory group formation methods, major focus on issues of inclusion of women and marginalised groups such as women poor	very influential period that led to major changes in policy and legislation. The focused time and attention spent on group formation processes, issues of inclusion and equity were not easily replicable to scale
First generation issues 1990s	Group formation, organisational change in forest department, management systems, productivity of forests and relationship to farming system	Large number of user groups formed in short period of time, less attention to issues of participation and equity within groups. A strong focus on learning and exchange between groups and attention to forest management and silvicultural issues
Second generation issues Late 1990s to 2000+	Equity vs equality on benefit sharing, good governance, conflict management and social justice	Major investment by donor supported forestry projects in coaching in good governance, additional programmes to support the livelihoods of poor people, and a refocusing of community forest funds and activities to the extreme poor and poor
Third generation issues 2000+ (during the period of conflict)	Internal power dynamics, enterprise development, social exclusion dominant issue	Conflict period highlighted the increasing problems of elite control and social exclusion, leading to major attempts to rebalance power within user groups. Continued support to income generation and livelihood activities, reduced role of forest department staff and increased role of NGOs as service providers
Fourth generation issues 2006+	Forest users as citizens, extreme poverty, rebalancing of sector actors, and the impacts of climate change and need for climate change adaptation and forests as sources for payment for ecosystem services	Development of a new national forest programme based on multi-stakeholder approaches at all levels. Recognition of the limitations of forests to directly reduce poverty, particularly for the extreme poor, a shift away from sole focus on community forestry to a range of management regimes that deliver multiple benefits to local people; Recognition of the potential of community forestry as an adaptation mechanism for climate change

Source: MFSC, 2013: 88.

3.7 RATIONALE BEHIND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN FORESTRY

In recent years, community management of forest resources has emerged as the main policy agenda in various developing countries (Adhikari et al., 2004; Agrawal, 2001; Heltberg, 2002). There are three main advantages for adopting community management in place of state management; (1) lower implementation and monitoring costs, (2) higher incentive for local people to get involved in management activities, and (3) adequate information related to natural resource management (Adhikari, 2005). Presently, approximately 17,500 recognised user groups legally manage over 1.7 million hectares or some 30 % of the total forested land in Nepal (DoF, 2014). A fundamental assumption of community involvement in forest management is that the particular forest communities cooperate to manage and use forest resources in a more sustainable way compared to centrally governed bureaucratic management. The rationale for community participation in forest management is multiple (see Table 3-5).

Table 3-5. The rationale behind community participation in forest management

Proximity	**local communities are the immediate custodian in closest touch with the forest and dependent on it in a variety of ways**
Impact	livelihoods of local communities are directly affected by the condition of the forest and the goods and services it provides
Management Capacity	community role and capacity to manage forest is well documented in the social science literature
Cost effectiveness	limited capacity and resources available to the government mainly in developing countries
Adaptation	flexible and adaptive management cannot be delivered by a central authority and requires local participation
Equity	equity and social justice in the distribution of forest benefits are important and local community involvement increases the resource flow to rural area
Livelihoods consideration	local communities often interested in non timber forest products (e.g., foods and medicine) as a safety net
Biodiversity and other services	multiple groups with different interests within a community help to manage the forest which may enhance biodiversity and other environmental services
Development philosophy	international communities and donor organisations often give high priority to participatory management of natural resources
Governance	decentralised forest management practices may improve performance across a range of governance indicators such as transparency, accountability, rule of law, etc.

Source: Adapted from Brown (1999).

3.8 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS TO IMPLEMENT CF IN NEPAL

The national, regional, district and range-post levels of Department of Forests and community forest user groups are the primary actors in the implementation of community forestry in Nepal. Many bilateral and multilateral donors and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) play important roles in providing financial and technical support to implement CF programmes. Similarly, a number of non state actors such as civil society organisations and private firms also play important roles in CF programme delivery. The linkage among key actors in CF programme is portrayed in Figure 3-2 and the detailed

structure of government agencies and FECOFUN that work with community forest users at the grass root level shown in Figure 3-3.

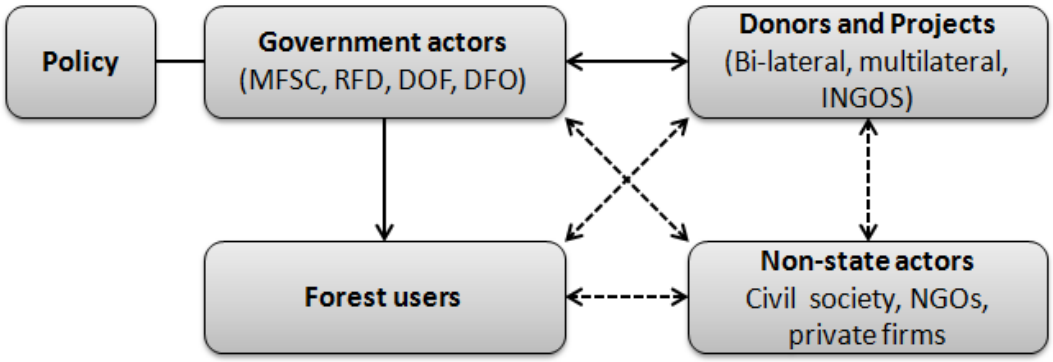


Figure 3-2. Key actors in the operation of community forestry, Nepal (Adapted from Khadka, 2009)

Notes: The solid two-directional arrow indicates the direct role that organisations play in policy setting and/or implementation; the solid one-directional arrow indicates the direct role organisations play in the operation of CF policy; and the dotted two-directional arrows indicate the operational relationships between organisations such as service providers and/or users. For acronyms see List of Acronyms p. xx.

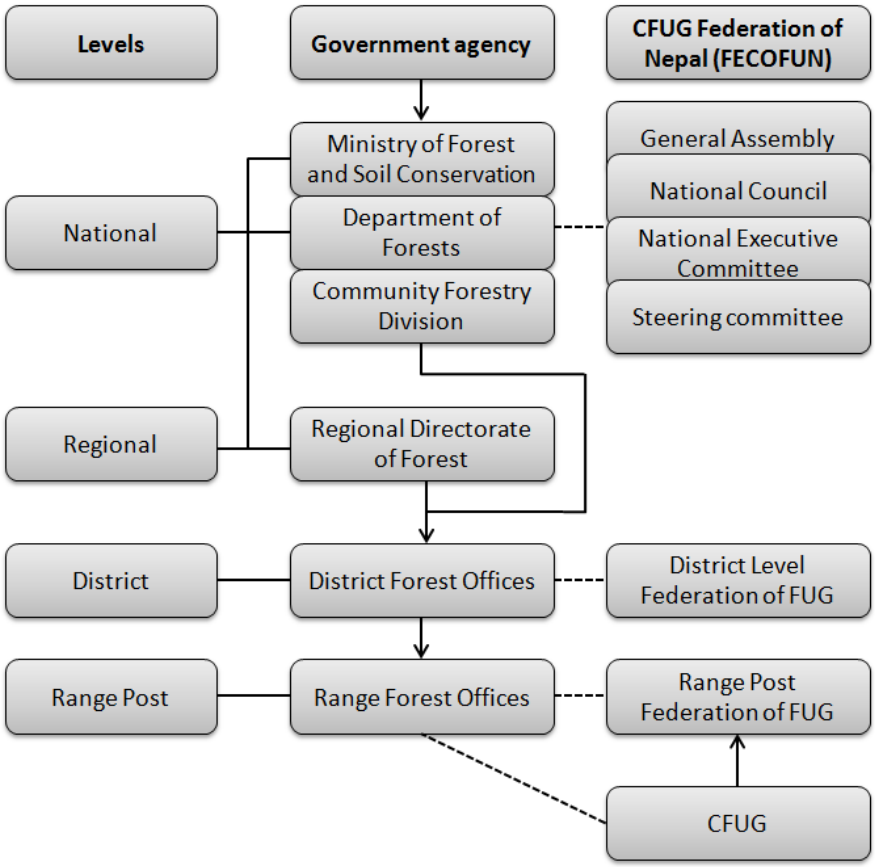


Figure 3-3. Organisational structure of Nepalese Ministry of Forestry and Soil Conservation Federation of Community Forestry User Groups of Nepal (Figure drawn after Dahal and Chapagain, 2008). For acronyms see List of Acronyms p. xx.

3.9 EVOLUTION OF OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY MODALITIES NEPAL

The practices embedded in community forestry in Nepal have also been modified, scaled up and deployed in various other resource management programmes in the country. Some important programmes that employ elements of the community-based forestry regime are (i) leasehold forestry, (ii) collaborative forest management, (iii) community-based watershed management, (iv) integrated conservation and development, and (v) protected area buffer zone forestry (Ojha et al., 2008). The evolution of CF policy and the expansion of community

forestry institutions over the past three decades stem from Nepal's unique socio-cultural, political, economic and ecological contexts. The large number of environmental, socio-political and economic considerations that have played an important role in community forestry in Nepal are summarised in Table 3-6.

Table 3-6. Summary of key conditions and factors for the success of CF in Nepal (Table mainly adapted from the text by Ojha et al 2009:10-11)

Condition, factors and policy context	References
heavy pressure exerted on the forest due to growing human and livestock populations	(Mahat, 1987)
presence of established, intense social networks and traditional modes of collective action around local forest management in Nepal	(Fisher, 1989; Chhetri and Pandey, 1992)
media coverage of the crisis of Himalayan environmental degradation and subsequent international conservation assistance	(Gutman, 1991)
presence of existing forest-based livelihood systems in the Middle Hills and incentives for local people to contribute in forest protection and management for a range of forest products	(Gilmour and Fisher, 1991)
incapacity of the Forest Department to protect and manage forests effectively, due to lack of manpower, resource and access	(Gilmour and Fisher, 1991; Subedi, 2006);
effect of the *Forest Act 1993*, particularly in the Middle Hills region, which has encouraged local people to exercise maximum control over forest resources	(Kanel,1993; Hobley, 1996)
'community forestry is the outcome of past experiences related to political turmoil, population growth, regulatory enforcement and excessive dependence of people on forest resources and a paradigmatic shift in development thinking'	(Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001 cited on Ojha et al 2009)
emergence of a democratic political system in 1990 and subsequent expansion of civil society spaces	(Ojha, 2006)
'breakdown of traditional power relationships through political movements and emergence of "subaltern" groups taking leadership power at the CFUG level'	(Bhattarai, 2007 cited on Ojha et al., 2009)
continued tradition of piloting new approaches and reflection among CF program stakeholders, including regular nationwide workshops every five years since the 1980s	(Ojha and Timsina, 2008)
potential of 'household approach' to poverty reduction through direct engagement of poor households in income generation from community forests without debilitating 'common property' tenure	(Dhungana, et al., 2008; NSCFP, 2007)
difficulty to exploit hills and mountain forests due to lack of access;	(Ojha et al., 2009)
improved information via research and scholarly interest in community forestry	(Ojha et al., 2009)

3.9.1 LEAHOLD FORESTRY

The original concept behind leasehold forestry was the leasing out of part of a degraded state forest to individuals, cooperatives or firms for commercial production of forest goods and services (MPFS 1988). The concept of leasehold forestry for rural poverty reduction was introduced in the *Forest Act 1993* and Forest Regulations 1995. According to this policy degraded areas of forestland have been allowed to be leased to poor communities for a period of 40 years, with exclusive rights to use the land for agro-forestry and various income generation activities (MoFSC, 2002). The programme is jointly implemented by district forest offices (identification of forest and potential users), district livestock offices (support livestock activities) and the Agricultural Development Bank (provide micro-credits).

In most cases, leasehold forestry helps to enhance natural regeneration and biodiversity, increase access to forage resources, and enable leasehold members to earn cash and experience an overall improvement in their livelihood situation (Ohler, 2003). It is perceived as an effective mechanism to alleviate poverty, especially because it is targeted to the poorest section of the community unlike broader CF programs. There is an ongoing debate about whether this program should be jointly implemented along with community forestry.

3.9.2 COLLABORATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

According to Collaborative Management Working Group (2003) the Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) approach promotes "sustainable forest management in collaboration with the local people for multiple benefits by maintaining ecological balance, generating

economic returns and improving livelihoods from the forests". CFM is a concept introduced in 2000 by the revised forestry sector policy, which was partly based on the Forest Act, 1993. Under the policy, the MoFSC has the authority to develop management plans for government-managed forests (Rai, 2007).

This program differs from the more widely known community forestry program and is being mainly implemented in *Terai* forests where heterogeneous communities, large forest blocks and readily accessible markets have hindered the successful implementation of community forestry. The CFM program is being implemented jointly with local communities, and local and central governments. However, the CFM approach is still at the pilot stage and, along with its framework policy, is under intense debate and strong controversy (Rana et al., 2009), and is often opposed by CF activists.

3.9.3 COMMUNITY-BASED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Following the release of the Eighth Development Plan (1992-97), the Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management (DSCWM) started a participatory approach to watershed management in collaboration with local NGOs and community-based organizations (Pandit et al., 2007). This was partly a result of the new political direction of the country towards more participatory and democratic approach to resource management and partly due to the growing awareness of rural people of integrated resource management at the local level. The success of community forestry in institutionalizing community-based organizations also played a substantial role in replicating a group approach to watershed conservation and a move away from traditional bureaucratic approaches dominated by technicians. While the engineering infrastructure development remained the same in

watersheds, the decision making process of where, when and how this infrastructure was set up was devolved to local community groups. Also the technology was modified to make it easier for community groups to utilize their knowledge and skills while at the same time the approach's watershed management activities were linked to other local resources such as forests, agriculture and livestock development.

Later on, DSCWM started working with community-forestry user groups instead of forming new soil conservation groups wherever they were available. In some cases, additional conservation groups have been formed to focus more on watershed management in areas where community groups were not formed before but where urgent watershed intervention was required. DSCWM is working in more than 60 districts in collaboration with NGOs, community forestry groups and other locally formed groups.

The community approach has contributed to watershed management by making it more transparent, community adapted, less expensive, culturally acceptable and robust than traditional techno-bureaucratic approaches.

3.9.4 INTEGRATED CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Nepal started establishing protected areas after 1973. Approximately 23% of the total land area of the country now falls within the protected area system. Initially, national parks, wildlife reserves and hunting reserves were established within several ecological zones with a largely 'command and control' approach to biodiversity, landscape and ecosystem conservation. While this system was very effective in conserving biodiversity, it had some unintended outcomes including the generation of conflict between the local people and park authorities over the use of natural resources (Brown, 1998). However, a more people-centric

approach to protected areas was initiated after 1990 with the introduction of 'conservation areas', which was a form of protected area that adopted a 'community-based conservation' approach (Bajracharya et al., 2007). The 'conservation area' designation enabled the government to achieve similar conservation goals as other protected area designations but with the involvement of local community groups in planning, implementing and monitoring conservation activities while at the same time enhancing the contribution to local livelihoods and social development (Bajracharya et al., 2007). The first ever 'conservation area' was declared in the Annapurna area, a world-famous trekking circuit for tourists. Three more conservation areas were later set up along the Himalayas, namely Manaslu, Gaurishankar and Kanchanjungha ranges. In each conservation area, an overarching council is formed from local people, while at the same time, a number of local level 'conservation groups' are instituted to carry out environmental conservation and local development activities. It is argued that the community-approach to conservation is less expensive, more efficiently governed, more supportive of community development, more tourist-friendly and more equitable in resource sharing than traditional 'fortress' conservation (Bajracharya et al., 2007).

3.9.5 PROTECTED AREA BUFFER ZONE FORESTRY

As argued earlier, conflict between local people and park authorities was rampant in Nepal until the 1990s as elsewhere in the world (Brown, 1998). In order to mitigate these conflicts, Nepal adopted a combination of approaches to reconcile conservation objectives with community needs. Besides setting up conservation areas managed by local conservation councils and groups, some innovative efforts were undertaken in already established national parks and wildlife reserves that were strictly managed by park authorities. A substantial portion of forests and other land use cover around national parks and wildlife reserves was set

aside as 'buffer zones' to be managed and sustainably used by local people in collaboration with park authorities. As with other community forests, the forests in the buffer-zones were handed over to local community groups as 'buffer zone community forests'. However, some unique features were associated with these groups including a greater focus on biodiversity conservation and wildlife protection and mechanisms to negotiate compensation with park authorities in the event that wildlife harmed humans or property. This approach has been praised for meeting multiple objectives: for achieving biodiversity conservation, eco-tourism enhancement, community development and amicable relationships between park authorities and local people (Paudel et al., 2007).

3.10 POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEPALESE FORESTRY SECTOR

Nepal is characterised as a mountainous country with a subsistence-oriented agricultural economy (FRD, 2005). It has a heterogeneous society in terms of caste, ethnicity, class, and gender (Blaikie et al., 2005). Of the economically active population, 90% are employed in the agricultural sector (CBS, 2005); 30% of the population are poor and face food security problems (Luintel and Bhattarai, 2006).

The Terai region and valleys in the Middle Hills have highly fertile land and are the regions where most economic activity is located. A large proportion of Nepal's population (~ 87%) is rurally based and dependent on agriculture for income and employment which is largely supported by forestry in some way. Therefore, the performance of the forestry sector has a direct impact on agriculture and the economy.

Nepal has the unique experience in the Indian sub-continent of having escaped colonial rule, which engulfed the neighbouring countries until about the middle of the twentieth century (Pandey, 1989). Despite its never-colonized status over its history, some Western scholars have characterised Nepal as a 'semi-colony' of British India and argued that Nepal suffered as a result. 'Because for a semi-colonial state this... involved many of the disadvantages of colonialism … with none of the advantages' (×Blaikie et al., 1979:30 cited in ×Pokharel and Tumbahamphe, 1995).

Those authors further make the case that Nepal is an unliberated semi-colony now partially incorporated within the larger political economy of India. This issue is often raised by left wing political parties in Nepal who argue that India is engaged in economic exploitation via control of natural resources (e.g., water resources). However, Nepal's modern political economy cannot be seen as being controlled by an external power. Yet, foreign aid and development intervention has had a considerable impact in restructuring the country's political economy especially with respect to natural resource management ×(Pokharel and Tumbahamphe, 1995). Various donor-supported forestry projects have had this effect by strengthening the ability of individuals, groups and local institutions to challenge the authorities. These projects played a vital role in empowering voices of the marginalized communities against inequality and in altering power relations in terms of class, caste, gender and access to resources and in the distribution mechanisms used (×Pokharel and Tumbahamphe, 1995;× NSCFP, 2011).

Several bilateral forestry projects have been influential in shaping the processes and outcomes of community-based forest management in Nepal. Although the majority of these projects focused on reversing ecological degradation in the Middle Hills following so called 'Himalayan Crisis' or the controversial 'Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation'; (Guthman, 1997, Eckholm, 1976, Eves and Messerly, 1989, Gilmour and Fisher, 1991), they

adopted different working modalities at various times generating a variety of outcomes in forest governance, resource conservation and contribution of forests to local livelihoods. These variations happened not only between different projects but also within the same projects during different project phases. For example, the bilateral forestry project funded by the Australian Government (Nepal-Australia Forestry Project which was later renamed the 'Nepal Australia Community Resource and Livelihood Programme') assisted in plantation activities and capacity building of forestry officials at the departmental level in 1960s. In the mid-1970s, the focus shifted to working with two hill districts in collaboration with district level government offices (Griffin, 1988). Later on, after the mid-1980s, there was an emphasis on building community forestry groups at the village or hamlet level, an approach that became a model across the country for community-based forest management (Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

Other projects funded by Switzerland, UK and USA followed suit in forming and institutionalizing community forestry user groups but they adopted different project and user group governance modalities. In this connection, the Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project, funded by the Swiss Government, worked in four mountain districts (Dolakha and Ramechap in the first phase, with the addition of Okhaldhunga in the second phase and Khotang in the third phase) and put the major emphasis on forest-based enterprise development and decentralized governance in addition to ecological restoration (NSCFP, 2007). The Nepal-UK Community Forestry Project (NUKCFP) later renamed the 'Livelihood and Forestry Programme', covered 14 Middle Hill Districts and four Terai Districts and emphasized income generation for poor households, networking between different community forestry user groups, and the connection of forestry to agriculture (LFP, 2004). The United States also offered substantial support to forestry programmes but did not establish separate forestry projects in Nepal like the UK, Australia and Switzerland. The

major US forestry funding was used by Nepalese chapters of INGOs such as Cooperation for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Nepalese government also adapted to transformations in the forestry sector via change in policy after the restoration of democracy in 1990.

In summary, the practices of community-based forest management have evolved over time as a result of constant interaction between Nepalese farmers, foresters and expatriate forestry advisors and the changing policies of the government. The combined efforts of donor-funded projects, government agencies and non-government organizations have encouraged local communities, administrations and civil society to actively take part in planning and decision making processes via the establishment of CFUGs as new, innovative and evolving institutions. As a result of these interactions, CF has become the major government policy towards natural resources management, and continues to transform the forestry sector political economy towards more productive, sustainable and equitable outcomes. Although quantifying the contribution of foreign aid and development interventions is difficult, it is evident that CF, as one of the major recipients of foreign aid, has played a crucial role in changing Nepal's forestry and wider political economy (NSCFP, 2007).

3.11 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF CF

CF is thought to bring many social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits to local forest user groups including indigenous forest-dependent communities ×(Kanel, 2005). The introduction of CF in Nepal represents an attempt to decentralise control over forest management through the direct involvement of local people in decision making and benefit sharing. In addition, some studies indicate there are also improvements in the overall

condition of the forests due to the people's sense of resource ownership (Kanel and Varughese, 2000). CF has also provided wider benefits, such as carbon sequestration and climate regulation to regional or global communities, who are not directly involved in the protection and management of resources. Moreover, economic improvement such as a greater degree of forest job security, reduced unemployment, a revitalised local economy and recreational attractions are additional benefits identified by adopting CF. These benefits have been documented in case studies undertaken by different organizations and researchers. Also, while there must be some 'costs' associated to these benefits, a detailed benefit-cost analysis is beyond the scope of this study. Building on the work of Hill (1999), it is assumed in this study that 'community forestry' is economically and socially more beneficial than 'business as usual' approaches such as leaving forest resources under ineffective state ownership where it becomes a *de facto* open access resource leading to its destruction in the long run. Dhungana (2006) concurs with this view that community forestry is economically more desirable than government-managed forestry but observes that this is true under certain institutional, ecological and social conditions. Thus, while there is general agreement on the benefits of community forestry, it is also recognised that these benefits depend on a range of conditions. The next section outlines some of the key benefits the literature identifies as being realised from the practice of community forestry in Nepal. A core aim of this research is to critically analyse what extent these benefits are realized in practice in Nepal's community forestry programmes.

3.11.1 CF EMPOWERS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

From the beginning community forestry has sought to improve local participation and equitable benefit distributions through formalised policies to empower 'backward, poverty stricken, and women users' (HMG/N, 1998; Pokharel and Niraula, 2004). In order to empower the CFUGs to manage community forests on an equitable and sustainable basis, the government introduced the *Forest Act 1993* and Forest Regulations (1995). An empowered organization is one that enhances relationships, identifies issues, and mobilises around those issues. Community organizations are believed to be empowered through the CF policy by involving people in decision-making and planning, thereby defining the issues of importance to them.

As a result, community forestry has contributed to more equitable benefit sharing; enhanced transparency, participation, and accountability; and improved pro-poor resource management practices (×Luintel et al., 2006; Shrestha et al., 2009).

3.11.2 CF PROVIDES BASIC FOREST GOODS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The basic goods and services derived from forests are significantly important for people living in rural areas because their livelihoods often depends on access to, and control over, resources. The main thrust of Nepal's forest policy is aimed at providing basic needs (e.g., fuel wood, poles, timber, leaf, litter, and fodder, grasses, bedding materials) to the rural population (Maharjan, 1998). CF management and associated operational plans establish rights for local communities to a sustainable supply/harvest of forest product for domestic use

such fuel-wood, fodder, timber and other products. Community forests can be a major contributor to improved rural livelihood by providing income, construction materials, energy and animal feed (Gilmour et al., 2004).

3.11.3 CF PROVIDE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS TO LOCAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

Multiple purpose management of forests by communities is likely to lead to better conservation of biodiversity outcomes than forest managed by the government or industry (Brown, 1999). Evidence from Nepalese CFs indicates that forest coverage has increased in Middle Hills resulting in increases in biodiversity and associated social benefits. Aesthetic value is also a hidden benefit of CF, which occurs as a result of more appropriate and sensitive forest management than that carried out by the state. Carbon sequestration and other environmental services are also potential benefits to regional and global communities. Nepal has initiated carbon trading by entering the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+) program operating under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facilities of the World Bank. Community forestry has been promoted as a viable forest institutional arrangement for implementing the carbon trading scheme (MFSC, 2012; Cadman et al., 2012).

3.11.4 CF PROVIDES ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

CF is currently focused on generating revenues and value adding. Many CFs have been selling timber and NTFPs and earning good incomes. It is claimed that more than a million of

Nepal's poorest people are obtaining 'green' jobs (full time, part-time, and casual) in CF and associated activities. Further, CFs have been leasing CF land to the poorest groups with rights to grow valuable perennial species, promote inter-cropping, seeding of grasses, aromatic species cultivation and processing. In most cases, CFUGs are selling forest products at competitive prices and have been surprisingly more efficient in generating revenues than central government (Kanel, 2008). In the fiscal year 2008/09, the DoF collected NR65 million (~A$1 million) or 11 % of the total revenue of forestry sector from a sale's tax it places on CFUGs ×(DoF, 2010). This suggests that CFs are not only contributing to local communities but also supporting the national economy.

Recently, approved CF management plans are being altered to focus on the business of running a CF in addition to sustainable forest management, a move being referred to as the development of second-generation operational plans (SGOP). This SGOP model also aims to be inclusive and to allocate 35% of total income for economic development to the poorest sections of society, especially *Dalit, Janajati*, and women. Various community forest user groups have also developed cooperative management approaches and delivered micro-finance to local communities. Moreover, the projected potential for selling carbon credits on the international market through REDD+ is creating hope in Nepal's government and community forestry user groups alike that they will be able to strengthen both the national and local economy respectively through the earning of carbon dollars (MFSC, 2012).

3.11.5 CF HELPS LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A portion of the revenue generated from CFs is often earmarked to fund community development initiatives such as school buildings, teachers' salaries, and various infrastructure

developments such as drinking water supply and the construction of village roads, bridges, canals, schools and clinics. Various case studies have shown that CFUGs positively contribute to local community development which ultimately improves the livelihoods of rural people (Collett et al., 1996; ×Dev et al., 2004; Pokharel et al., 2007; Chapagain and Banjade, 2009). The major investment made by CFUGs has been on community development activities (36 % of their expenses), which includes road construction, school support and other infrastructure development (Kanel, 2008). These costs otherwise would have to be borne by the government or would not be undertaken.

3.11.6 CF PROMOTES WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

CF is recognised as having the potential to increase women's participation in natural resources management. In Nepal, a recent initiative for gender balance in CFUG includes the provision of incorporating both men and women as members of CFUGs from each household as opposed to the traditional practices in which only males were considered the members because of their social status as the 'head of the households' (Ojha et al., 2009). An increasing trend of women's participation in community forestry has been documented by various authors (Kanel and Kandel, 2004; ×Luintel and Timsina, 2008; ×Giri et al., 2010). Increasing female participation and their representation in the executive committee can provide them with more opportunities to put their agenda clearly (Upadhaya, 2005). ×Agrawal (2009) notes that engaging women as members of executive committees alone may not affect management decisions. However it certainly opens up new possibilities for the way that they see and react to the world around them (Fussel, 1996; Mohanty, 2002), which ultimately helps women's empowerment.

3.11.7 FORESTS ARE BETTER MANAGED UNDER CF THAN GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

A key claim made about CF is that management practices result in forests with an improved biophysical condition compared to forests under government control (Gautam et al., 2002). Most of the recent studies clearly indicate that CF is especially successful in forest conservation (Yadav et al., 2003; Thoms, 2008). Recent forest cover change analysis in various Districts indicates that forest cover has increase under CF management whereas it has decreased in government-managed areas (see for example Niraula et al., 2013). Growing stock (volume and number of trees) is also better in CF management compared to government-managed forest. The key reasons cited are: local pride in ownership, local regulation especially of illegal activities, and fund raising, fund mobilisation and reduced government costs for forest management.

3.11.8 CF PROMOTES INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Ostrom's 'theory of common property regimes' the creation of local institutional arrangements overcomes the 'tragedy of the commons' and enables it to be successfully managed (Ostrom, 1990). CFUGs are the basic organization in CF management and many CFUGs have federated in Village Development Committee (VDC), District Development Committee (DDC) level and National level and are thought to be working well. CFUG federations have a strong voice at different levels and work to formulate policy and legal instruments to advance CF management in Nepal. Recently, there has been an emphasis on the institutional development of CFUGs to improve their capacity to undertake forest management effectively and efficiently (Kanel and Varughese, 2000). SGOPs also focus on

governance in CFs and to institution strengthening. Other examples of institutional development are: group/community formation, leadership development, training, workshops, and interaction among groups, team building, co-operatives and microenterprise development.

3.11.9 CF PROMOTES GOOD FOREST GOVERNANCE

A community forest user group's constitution and operational plan defines the governance arrangements for that CFUG (Ojha et al., 2009). Within the framework of CF guidelines, each CFUG prepares its own constitution which defines its social arrangements, roles, rights and responsibilities of the members and office bearers. The Constitution is registered to and approved by the DFO. ×Ojha and Pokharel (2005) assert that, from a governance point of view, local-level institutions for forest management and their networks provide a model for democratic governance. In recent years, local communities have gradually been able to claim their rights over forests by making themselves active political agent rather than passive recipients of government services as in the past (×Paudel et al., 2008). Through the expansion of CFUG networks nationally via the Federation of Community Forestry Users Group Nepal (FECOFUN) and ongoing wider civic movement, the traditional top-down state power has been challenged. To this end the discourse and practice of community forestry in Nepal is now shared evenly by the government and civil society (Luintel, 2006).

3.11.10 CF HELPS OVERALL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CF follows the basic principle of sustainable development, which focuses equally on social, economic and environmental issues/problems. In CF, forest-based enterprises are established to make use of harvestable resources utilising a sustainable management approach.

Sustainable development refers 'to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs' (×FAO, 1978; FAO, 2001). Furthermore, it is a progressive economic and social approach to human society that aims to maintain people's quality of life in accordance with their dignity and well-being, without compromising the ability of the future generations to do likewise (Wolfensohn and Fuller, 1998). Nepal has a long history of community based forest management and the initial primary goal is to achieve self-sufficiency in all aspects of forest production (Kanel, 2005).

Recent studies indicate that community groups and small holders have been protecting and managing common pool resources for sustainable manner (Ojha et al., 2009; Pokharel et al., 2012). Many households within the community groups are highly dependent on the management of remnant wood-lands, on-farm trees and agro forestry farming both for subsistence need (fruit, fuel wood, fodder, medicinal products) and income generation. Localised management of forest resources is viewed as more likely to supply the resources that ultimately achieve overall community development than centralised management (Maharjan et al., 2009).

3.12 GOOD FOREST GOVERNANCE IN THE NEPALESE CONTEXT

A variety of forest governance approaches have been practiced globally under diverse nomenclature including participatory forestry, social forestry, community forestry, collaborative forest management, joint forest management and so forth (Hobley, 1993; Petheram et al., 2002). In the Asia-Pacific region, approximately 27 percent of forests are managed under some form of community-based governance, whereas the forest area under similar arrangements in Latin America and Africa is around 30 and 0.5 percent respectively (Dahal et al., 2011). Overall, there has been a trend in all these three continents towards community-based governance despite the complexities and the frequent resistance of forest bureaucracies.

As employed here, forest governance covers the full range of issues relating to how forest resources are managed. These vary from how decisions about forest use are made and who is involved in the planning and decision-making process to the administration of forest laws and policies on the ground (World Bank, 2003). Better governance practices provide opportunities for stakeholders to engage in dialogue with government agencies and share their practical knowledge about local forest management practices and institutional reform of the forest sector.

Forest governance can be conceptualised as the set of principles and rules of forest resource management under which power is exercised and practiced in all spheres from private to public and the relationship among the state and its citizens, civil society and the private sector (Pokheral et al., 2008; Pokharel and Niraula, 2004). Better communication linkages between people, community groups and local institutions in terms of sharing of power and

responsibilities have been recognised as a component of good forest governance (Ojha, 2008; Ojha et al., 2003).

Although a number of policy changes and forest reform practices were implemented in the past (see Table 2-2), they failed to protect the forest resources and fulfil the basic needs of the local communities. Previous forest reform initiatives did not include adequate public participation and ownership by local communities and incentives to bring about the important changes to policies, approaches and institutions required for effective reform (RECOFTC, 2001). Weak institutions, inconsistent laws, corruption, poor law enforcement, lack of public participation, inadequate regulations, centralised control, and a lack of transparency; in summary poor forest governance threatens the success of forest management initiatives.

For more than two decades, widespread policy reforms have transformed the basic institutional conditions for natural resource governance in most developing countries. In Nepal, governance practices are becoming increasingly important to achieve the national goal of poverty reduction, sustainable forest management, and overall sustainable development. However, enormous differences between rich and poor, low caste and high caste, women and men coupled with weak institutions has resulted in the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer (HMG/N, 2003). For Nepalese poor, improved governance may mean a better chance of civil servants acting responsively, and create greater opportunities for their participation in resource planning and decision making processes (Pokheral and Grosen, 2001).

3.13 SOME CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH CF

Despite the success and considerable contribution of CF to local communities recognised in the literature, there are still a number of unresolved issues and challenges regarding various aspects of CF (Ojha et al., 2009;Pokharel et al., 2012; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). The meaningful participation of different actors in CF processes is one of the major challenges for CF in Nepal (MFSC, 2013; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). Studies indicate that many CFUGs remain controlled by local elites, while the participation of socio-economically disadvantaged groups is often absent, and poor households tend to benefit less than those rather better off (Pokharel et al., 2008, 2012; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). While the number of CFUGs is increasing in all districts, it is reported that there are inadequate financial resources available to the DFO to provide for the growing number and diverse types of support CFUGs require (Springate-Baginski et al., 2003b; Kanel and Kandel, 2004).

Another issue, identified by Kanel (2004), is the need to make the CFUG and its committees more accountable and approachable to the majority of CF users including poor, women and disadvantaged groups. Structurally, a CFUG is formed as an autonomous organization to govern the group and manage an area of forest land handed over by the government under an agreed 'constitution' (to operate the group's business) and 'operational plan' (to manage the group's forests). Each CFUG forms (by election or consensus) an executive committee comprising of office bearers and executive members for a specific tenure, such as two years, and the committee is renewed upon the completion of the tenure on an ongoing basis.

In many cases, the CFUG executive committee carries out everyday decisions regarding forest management on behalf of the CFUG. It is due to the exercise of power by the executive

committee that the CF has been susceptible to elite control over the forestry related decisions in the absence of effective mechanisms for the committee to be accountable to the entire CFUGs (Kanel and Kandel, 2004). Maharjan et al (2004) report that the transformation of power from elites to the marginalized and poorer people is often a challenging undertaking in CF. A key element in improving governance of community-forestry user groups appears to be transforming these power structures toward more equitable, inclusive and sustainable forestry institutions at local level.

A number of authors have claimed that community forestry has improved the overall forests' condition including biodiversity. In contrast, the frequent removal of thorny bushes, climbers, and other weeds is very common in community forestry during bush clearing (Khadka and Schmidt-Vogt, 2008), which might convert all shrub-land into high forest area and reduce the structural diversity of forest (Shrestha et al., 2010). Along with shrubs, Pteridophytes, especially the ferns are other neglected groups, are removed as weeds which may lead soil erosion in some cases.

3. 14 CONCLUSION

CF is acknowledged to be a globally expanding model of decentralised forest governance. It has been implemented in Nepal for the past three decades, mainly driven by the failure of centralised forest management. Legislative policies have gradually become more favourable to community participation. In the early 1990's, legislation was changed and community forestry was fully legalised and this encouraged greater involvement of local communities. The situation of forest governance is gradually improving although it not free from challenges. Good forest governance is critical to sustainable forest management in Nepal,

particularly because of caste, gender and class-based discrimination, and political instability and corruption.

Both the forests and communities co-evolve over time and change is context specific and can be positive and negative. The roles that forests play are changing from their primary role for wood production to one where they provide a wide variety of goods and ecological services. CF commenced in Nepal as a result of a number of external and internal interventions and, given the mostly positive results that it has delivered, there is no possibility to go back as millions of peoples now rely on CF for their livelihood.

The World Bank and various authors regard Nepal as a global leader in engaging local communities in forest resource planning and management. Similarly, the role of leasehold forestry in poverty reduction and recent collaborative forest management policies for greater inclusion of various stakeholders in forest management for mutual benefits are well regarded. It is now evident that community based forest management programmes have been established as a successful program to improve forest and livelihood of people. However, some challenges remain especially those related to the full empowerment of women and marginalised people. The focus on women and marginalised groups directs our attention to CF governance and the degree to which these groups are empowered socially and economically. As Agrawal (2005) argues it is the 'mode of environmental government' or 'environmentality' that dialectically shapes ecological and social outcomes by creating ‘subjectivities’ around forest resource management. Theoretically drawing on Agrawal (2005), I develop my enquiry framework based on different governance modalities documented by various development organizations. Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical underpinning and research framework and methodology.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH APPROACH, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK, AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 BACKGROUND

The review of decentralized good forest governance within the global context (Chapter 2) and of the evolution of community based forest management and forest governance arrangements in Nepal (Chapter 3) have paved the way for an evaluation of how community forestry is performing in Nepal and whether it is being governed for the benefit of marginalized groups. However, prior to undertaking the evaluation, this chapter details the methodological framework and research methods adopted in this study. Firstly, it reviews some conceptual underpinnings of governance associated with natural resource management, particularly those related to community-based forest management. It also provides a theoretical explanation about how and why previously unorganized people team up around an environmental resource, such as a forest, exercising power and producing a mode of environmental governance. Secondly, it reviews the different governance frameworks employed by various international organizations and synthesises elements of these frameworks into an appropriate framework for use in this dissertation. Thirdly, the chapter outlines the general research methodology employed for the fieldwork, including the selection of study districts and community forests and the associated data collection and analysis methods. The final section provides details of how the field research was conducted including ethics approval, field visit schedule, data storage and security procedures.

4.2 CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF FOREST GOVERNANCE

While, as noted in Chapter 2, the concept of governance is contested, it has been often understood as a form of governing via the fusion of public and private sectors to produce better outcomes by promoting the strengths and eliminating the shortcomings of both. From this neoliberal perspective, 'governance consists of a revitalized and efficient public sector based on markets, competition, and management techniques imported from the private sector' (Bevir 2002:10). In a subsequent analysis, Bevir (2011) further underscores how neo-liberal narratives of governance dominate in the field of international development, serving to reinforce the idea and practice of privatization. However, while multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank have certainly promoted a neoliberal perspective on governance, they do not promote the automatic privatization of natural commons such as forests. Actually, governance arrangements need not build on a binary conception of 'state versus market' and there are numerous examples of common property institutions that engage in 'governance' but involve neither the state nor the corporate/private sector (e.g., Dietzqwa et al., 2001; Ostrom, 1990).

How can 'governance' then be understood as an encompassing concept to include all processes of governing? Fukuyama (2013:350) interprets the concept as requiring a powerful state and contends that 'governance' means ‘government’s ability to make and enforce rules and to deliver services'. This conception is even more problematic than the neoliberal one since it narrows down or centralizes the scope of governance around only public institutions and overlooks the roles of community institutions and private sector alike in making rules and delivering services. It is, hence, better to understand 'governance' in terms of 'how' something is governed, instead of 'which' organizations or actors govern. Further, there are two more fundamental questions about 'governance' which are important to address in the

environmental sector. Firstly, how should 'governance' be understood in more complex situations such as 'community forestry' where people, on the one hand, resist both government and private sector interference but on the other hand, gradually turn out to exercise the same sanctions within themselves as the government or the private sector intends? Secondly, how does this transition from resistance to compliance in a community institution result in creating 'community-based governance'?

Actually the notion of 'governance' is misunderstood if it is viewed simply as a technical tool instead of a political process and if the question of how and why 'governance' happens is not explored. The root of 'governance' hence can be found in Michael Foucault's synthesis of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991). This narrative of 'governmentality' broadly explains how 'governance' is imported, reproduced and exercised within an institution by its actors (Bevir, 2011). Governmentality, as Foucault (2011:102) argues, is actually an 'art of government' or the 'ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power'.

Drawing on the Foucauldian idea of governmentality, Agrawal (2005:12) introduces the concept of 'environmentality' making it particularly relevant to the forestry sector. From this perspective, environmental governance in institutions such as community forestry organizations is better understood more specifically as the 'governmentalization of the environment'. In this process, people engaged in forest management are gradually transformed into 'subjects' of government or other powerful institutions such as international environmental organizations who benefit from this subjectivity. It is by 'environmentality' that 'people's identities, activities and attitudes come to internalize previously external norms or mandates' without being forced (Peet et al., 2011: 33).

The neoliberal idea of governance in resource management put forward by the FAO and World Bank has been challenged by many governmental organisations and local groups actually involved in forest management. The frameworks, and associated principles and criteria, imposed from outside, either by the sovereign government or international agencies, are resisted and challenged by local groups. Local communities are reluctant to adopt the new technologies, skills and knowledge that undermine or at least challenge the prevailing forms of indigenous knowledge embedded in local resource management. Nonetheless, the dichotomy between the universal forms of forest governance on the one hand and so called 'indigenous' management of forest resources on the other has been found to be overstated in the case of community forestry in Nepal. While at times people have confronted government policies that employ universal frameworks of resource governance and defended their own positions of sustainably using forest resources. Yet, a deeper understanding into these 'community-based' organizations suggests that local institutions are actually adopting the universal governance framework, which is filtering down to them through government and donor funded agencies. As a result of this process of 'environmentality', local people engaged in community forestry become subjects of these powerful institutions and ultimately reproduce the desired 'environmental governance' within themselves.

‘Environmentality’ is the major approach employed in this dissertation to conceptualise community forest management. However, because environmentality is an overarching framework, to understand the governance associated with 'community forestry', I draw on literature from three additional approaches. These are: i) common property theory, ii) feminist institutionalism and iii) decentralization (Fig 4-1).

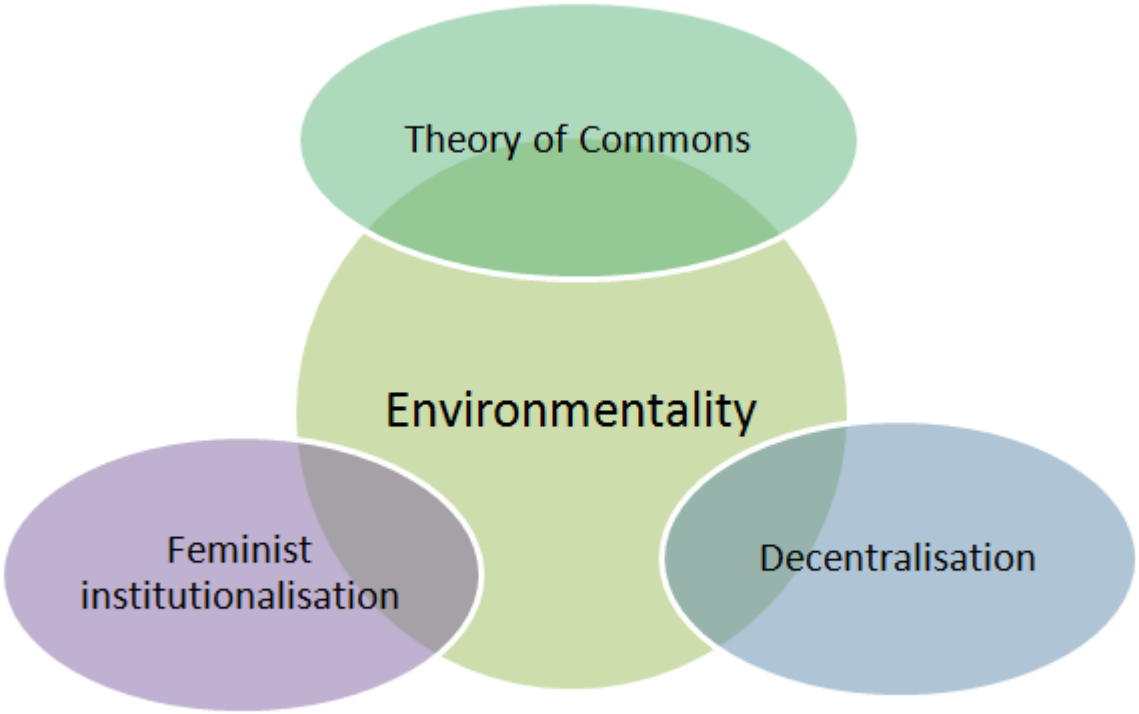


Figure 4-1. Conceptual framework for this research

4.2.1 THEORY OF THE COMMONS

The governance of natural resources as a ‘commons’ used by many individuals is an issue of increasing concern to researchers and policy makers. The 'theory of commons' deals with common property resources, where individuals do not have exclusive property rights. In other words, any common pool resources such as forests which are shared by many people under some institutional arrangement fall under the 'common property' concept (Bromley and Cernea, 1989). Commons may comprise a wide variety of natural environments and can include village pastures, bush-lands, uncultivable fields, community forests, waste lands, village ponds, rivers and lakes (FAO, 2002). First employed by Gordon in 1954 (Gordon 1954), the 'theory of commons' became popular after Hardin’s (1968) paper on *The Tragedy*

of the Commons. Hardin highlighted that when individuals act independently and rationally and follows their own self-interest, it ultimately leads to the destruction of the common resource in question. Hardin and others suggested that the possible solution to the tragedy was either to regulate the commons through the central governmental agencies or to convert the commons into private property.

The 'tragedy' theory, however, has been heavily criticised (Agrawal, 2001). Ostrom (1990) disputed that the 'only way' to solve the problems of common pool resource was via the state or the market and that there was a role for voluntary organizations (Ostrom, 1990). Many scholars have researched how local institutions using common property arrangements can result in efficient use, equitable allocation and sustainable conservation of resources Agrawal, 2001). By focusing on case studies and findings, the theory of the commons contributes to a more thorough understanding of the effectiveness of local resource governance (Agrawal and Chhatre, 2006). The management of community forests as commons requires a more grounded understanding of local knowledge, community needs, and differences in access to and control over resources between user groups within local communities (Dessler et al., 2010). In the theory of commons, the role of local communities has been crucial as it is seen as the basis for organizing users groups, managing common resources, distributing benefits, and sharing burdens between economic and social groups. The theory of the commons and the concept of 'environmentality' complement each other and offers another way of thinking about the norms that are embedded in communities and that influence what and why people do things.

4.2.2 FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALISM

Feminist institutionalism is a version of 'new institutionalism', elaborated from a gender perspective. Political institutions profoundly shape social life and are also gendered. In general, a focus on gender, politics and institutions defines the parameters of the new field of 'feminist institutionalism' which address the significance of gender (Krook and Macky, 2012). Feminist political scientists have been concerned with institutions of state and society, particularly in explaining why women are constantly in the position of a chronic minority in public institutions. Witz and Savage (1992) argue that early feminist work on gender and institutions generally overlooked the role of institutional processes and practises in reinforcing and reproducing gender inequality. In brief, feminist institutionalism is a new institutionalist approach that looks at 'how gender norms operate within institutions and how institutional processes construct and maintain gender power dynamics' (Lowndes, 2010:65).

Women's contribution to household activities and managing common property resources is usually not accounted for. In fact, the definition of 'work' has often been limited to paid work and has mainly been with reference to the productive sector, ignoring women's dominant work experience. Feminists' argue that it is these gender biases that get perpetuated in society through lived experience and get sanctioned by theory which has been formed through these experiences. Feminists have, therefore, stressed the urgency of critiquing existing theories and change practices that discriminate against women. More specifically, the causes of gender inequality are understood to exist at the macro-level, rooted in a stratifying system or structure known as 'patriarchy' (Krook and Macky, 2012). A line of feminist research influenced by Ferguson's (1984) critique of bureaucracy viewed the institutions of the state and state bureaucracy as essentially and consistently patriarchal.

In recent years, feminist political science has progressively moved on from a focus on 'women and politics' to more relational and institutional conceptions of 'gender and politics' (Beckwith, 2005; Childs and Krook, 2006). Studies are more focused on the complexities of institutional gender dynamics. Feminist institutionalists recognise that political explanation about ideas, interests and institutions are interlinked.

To this end, feminist institutionalism enhances analysis and makes for more effective explanations. Feminists bring to the study of institutions a specific lens that makes visible constitutive gendered power relations and the processes that support or undermine them. In identifying changing gender relations as a potential cause of institutional change feminism increases the capacity of 'new' institutionalists to model causality. In community-based forest management, women are an integral part of managing and using the resources. Space provided by community-based institutions for women to decide on forest management activities matters in understanding whether the institution is suitably governed or not. Women's participation lays the ground for the effective management of common pool resources; however, there is still a lack of empirical knowledge on how to institutionalize women's participation in the formal institutional structures of community-based forest resources. Establishing the legal basis for women's participation in common pool resources is essential to ensure their access, use and control over resources within complex rural communities.

4.2.3 DECENTRALIZATION

It is often argued that democratic decentralization can improve efficiency, equity, democracy and resource management (Larson and Soto, 2008; Larson and Ribot, 2004). Based on these ideas, shifting responsibility from central to local government authorities or to local level actors and institutions for natural resource management is being increasingly practiced in many developing countries (Nygreen, 2004). However, as Tacconi (2007) notes, our current understanding of the theory of decentralized forest management, in the form of political and institutional decentralization, needs to be investigated to assess the circumstances that lead to positive outcomes, particularly in relation to forest governance .

Decentralization in forest management is an often debated issue. It has been used interchangeably to mean the transfer of control over resources from the state to local level (Agrawal and Gupta, 2005; Tacconi, 2007), or from the central government to local governments (Larson, 2002; Anderson, 2003). However, in either case, decentralized forest management refers to the transfer of authority and management functions related to resources from state to local institutions with the goal of promoting community control and management of resources (Tacconi, 2007). Analysing the theory of decentralized forest management, Larson (2003) groups the key factors that influence the 'socio-economical and environmental outcomes' of decentralized natural resources management into three spheres: (i) legal arrangements, (ii) mediating factors, and (iii) local government decision-making processes.

To this end, the necessary conditions for achieving decentralization in forest resources are as follows (Balooni et al., 2008:21-23):

- Provide adequate access to forest resources to local communities;
- Enhance the influence of local communities in resource planning and decision-making processes;
- Allow local communities to challenge traditional state authority;
- Expose conflicts over resource interests;
- Set up accountable institutions from local to central level government;
- Increase human and financial resources for local governments that assign high priority to natural resources management.

However, the overall outcomes of decentralisation and the conditions encouraging effective implementation vary considerably based on local circumstances, particularly socio-economic, legal, and political conditions (Balooni et al., 2008).

Decentralizing forest governance is particularly relevant to community-based forest management for several reasons. First, community-based forest management is founded on local, community actions not large, centralised institutions. Rendering authority to local institutions to manage forest resources is hence crucial to make these institutions more accountable. Second, community-based forests are often initially owned by the state, but subsequently handed over to local communities. These local communities are not able to exercise power and decision making associated to forestry related activities without having a devolved authority to do so. Third, decentralization not only relocates authority, but also creates an incentive for the local people to invest their resources in community forestry in the expectation of gaining a return. Fourth and most importantly, a tendency of governments to centralise authority often poses a threat to community institutions and thereby their capacity to sustainability manage common resources (Ribbot et al., 2006; Phelps et al., 2010). Decentralization contributes to ‘environmentality’ among local forestry users by providing them the authority to sanction themselves. Making them authorized to formulate and practice rules in resource management and use, a central government can create ‘community-based governments' in order to achieve its broader environmental objectives. Hence,

decentralization turns out to be one of the tripods of 'environmentality', while the other two being the 'theory of the commons' and 'feminist institutionalism'.

To this end, building on the 'governmentality' ideas of Foucault and others, 'environmentality' captures the idea of the ways in which formal and informal institutions channel individuals and groups into disciplining themselves with regard to environmental practices such as forest management. In the forest sector, such disciplining occurs within a set of specific political (centralised/decentralised), social (equal/discriminatory) and economic (public, private or common pool resources) arrangements. In the context of Nepalese forest governance characterised by decentralised, discriminatory, common pool resources, a specific form of 'environmentality' will emerge. The nature of this 'environmentality' can be captured by examining some of the key aspects of how community forestry is governed. These three elements enrich each other as a foundation of 'environmental governance', and the following section discusses various forms of governance promoted by different organizations as methodological frameworks.

4.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature identifies a number of international organizations and interest groups, with a variety of mandates, which promote institutional arrangements for natural resources policy and governance (e.g., World Bank, 2009; WRI, 2009; FAO, 2011). The current set of arrangements associated with forestry and natural resources is best seen as a complex, hybrid mix of international law, national law and regulations, and non-governmental performance-based measures such as international certification schemes and industry codes of conduct (World Bank, 2009). All of these actors are devoted to supporting the diverse functions of

forests, and developing and implementing measures designed to protect and enhance forest benefits. However, despite the fact that their interaction and support of forest governance arrangements often results in competition, the key elements of governance and associated indicators are in fact quite similar. Research and practice appears to show, therefore, that complex issues related to forest management require the adoption of synergistic approaches involving a wide range of policy instruments associated with forestry professionals and communities.

Building on the discussion in Chapter 2, this dissertation reviewed a number of different frameworks associated with good forest governance promoted by various international institutions. These included the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1997), the Asia Development Bank (ADB, 1999), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2009), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2009), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2009), the World Bank (2009), World Resources Institute (WRI, 2009), and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2011). Three of these were considered to be especially useful for this study and are outlined in more detail below.

4.3.1 WRI'S GOVERNANCE OF FORESTS (GFI) FRAMEWORK

The Governance of Forests Initiative (GFI) seeks to bring broadly accepted principles of good forest governance to bear on the challenges of sustaining forests in developing countries (WRI, 2009). The GFI Framework includes a complete set of qualitative indicators for conducting civil society led assessments of forest governance at the national level (Figure 4-2). The GFI toolkit(WRI, 2009) provides the following resources:

- A common definition and conceptual framework for understanding the meaning of good forest governance across different countries' local socio-political contexts;

- A practical toolkit for civil society organizations to independently, reliably, systematically and comprehensively diagnose the integrity of institutions and processes that govern forests in their countries; and
- A set of specific, measurable, reportable and verifiable indicators of good governance of forests.

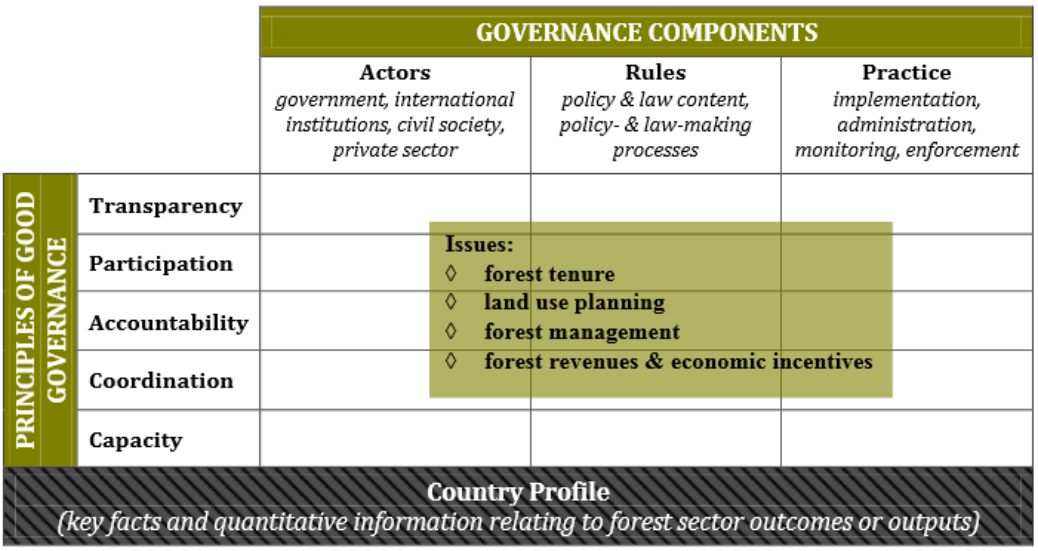


Figure 4-2. Governance of Forest Initiative (GFI) Framework (Source: WRI, 2009)

The five principles of good governance (transparency, participation, accountability, coordination and capacity) provide the basic criteria against which the components of forest governance (actors, rules, and practices) can be assessed. The indicators are clustered according to six thematic areas (forest tenure, land use planning, forest revenues, forest management, cross-cutting institutions and cross cutting issues).

This framework provides convincing principles for analysing governance outcomes in natural resource management. However, it is too broad to capture specific aspects of governance outcomes that are of interest to local communities. The specific indicators to measure governance outcomes at the community level are lacking in this framework. Furthermore,

there is no weighting attached to the elements in the framework which implies all indicators are equally important which may not be the case.

4.3.2 WORLD BANK FRAMEWORK

The World Bank has noted that the lack of an appropriate analytical framework makes it is much harder to identify the major shortcomings in a country's forestry sector when it fails to deliver multiple benefits and has proposed a set of tools to diagnose forest governance weaknesses and pinpoint appropriate reforms (World Bank, 2009). The World Bank's approach is underpinned by five building blocks (or key roots) that are envisaged to cover all important dimensions of forest governance (World Bank, 2009: 21). These are:

- Transparency, accountability, and public participation;
- Stability of forest institutions and conflict management;
- Quality of forest administration;
- Coherence of forest legislation and rule of law;
- Economic efficiency, equity, and incentives.

This framework was constructed by the World Bank based upon its previous experiences, an extensive literature review, and complemented with a wide range of expert opinion. The key elements of forest governance available in the literature were used to develop the appropriate set of subcomponents (Figure 4-3).

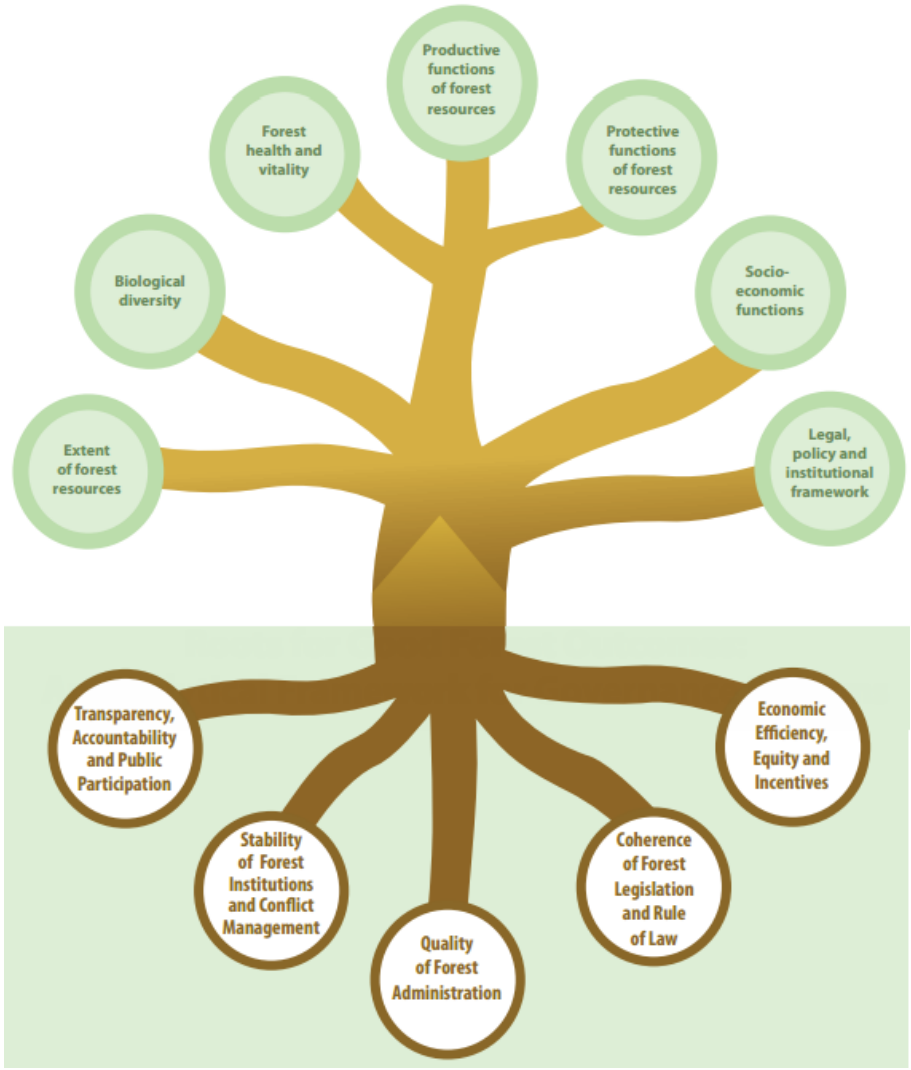


Figure 4-3. Analytical Framework for Forest Governance (World Bank, 2009)

Although the World Bank's framework for governance is comprehensive and prepared after a substantial literature review, this framework is also too broad to cover the specific aspects of community forestry in Nepalese context. Similar to WRI, this framework does not weight the elements which are therefore effectively equal. Furthermore, this framework is heavily focused on state institutions such as stability of forest institutions, quality of forest institutions, coherence of forest legislation and so on. Therefore it is unlikely to be useful to assess the specific practices associated with community based forest governance.

4.3.3 FAO/PROFOR FRAMEWORK

A recent and comprehensive framework developed by FAO and the World Bank-managed Program on Forests (PROFOR) identifies three key components or 'pillars' of forest governance: (a) policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks; (b) planning and decision-making processes; and (c) implementation, enforcement, and compliance policies. As set out in Figure 4-4, it grades performance on these pillars across six areas: accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, fairness, participation, and transparency (FAO, 2011: 11).

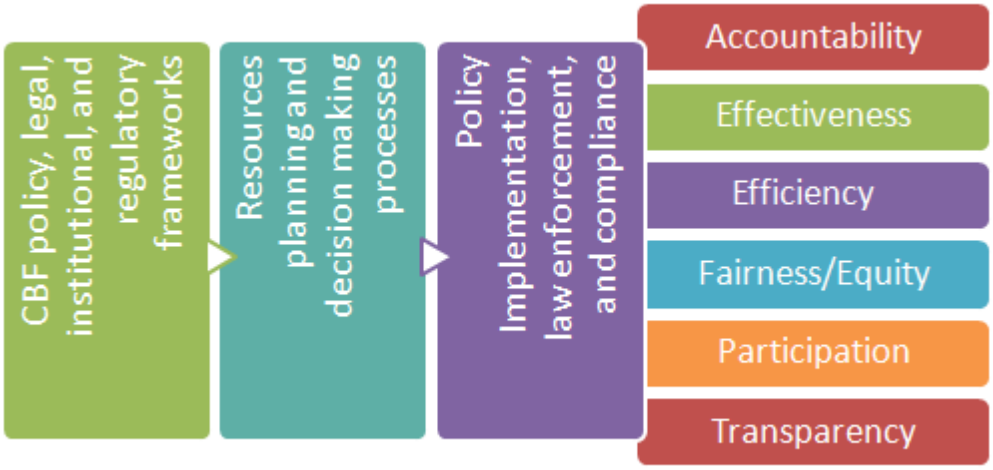


Figure 4-4. Analytical Framework for 'Good' Forest Governance (FAO, 2011)

This framework provides a comprehensive checklist and useful tool to identify and address problems in the governance of forest resources. It can also be used to ensure that efforts to reduce carbon emissions from forests in emerging and developing economies are properly managed(FAO, 2011). Although no weighting is applied to the indicators under this framework, it can be used to assess the quality of decentralized community based governance

with little or no modification. This more recent and comprehensive framework can be used to assess governance at the country level. However, some additional local-level indicators must be identified and incorporated within the scope of this framework to make it operational at the community level.

4.3.4 REVIEW OF OTHER FRAMEWORKS

Several other frameworks have been proposed by various international institutions including UNDP (1997), ADB (1999), USAID (2009), IUCN (2009), and UNESCAP (2009), each utilising varying elements of governance (Table 4-1). Three key elements of governance—participation, transparency, and accountability—are common to all selected international frameworks. Other important elements of governance identified are effectiveness, rule of law, equity, efficiency and coherence. There are certain other elements such as combating corruption, regulatory quality and political stability that are recognized by the World Bank as important. Similarly, a commitment to the public good and enhancement of the stock of social capital are recognized as important elements of governance by USAID.

Table 4-1. Summary governance framework proposed by various international organizations and associated key elements

Key Elements	World Bank 2009	UNDP, 1997	ADB, 1999	USAID, 2009	IUCN, 2009	UN-ESCAP, 2009	FAO 2011
Participation							
Transparency							
Accountability							
Effectiveness							
Rule of law							
Equity							
Efficiency							
Coherence							

Note: UNDP – United Nation Development Programme, ADB – Asian Development Bank, EU- Commission of European Union, USAID – US Agency for International Development, UN-ESCAP – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, and FAO –Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nation

The methodological framework for this study was developed by reviewing the governance frameworks proposed by various institutions listed in Table 4-1 and also from discussions with a wide range of stakeholders associated with Nepalese community forestry. These included the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, the Department of Forests, the Federation of Community Forestry Users Group of Nepal, and various NGOs involved in the forestry sector (Figure 4-5).

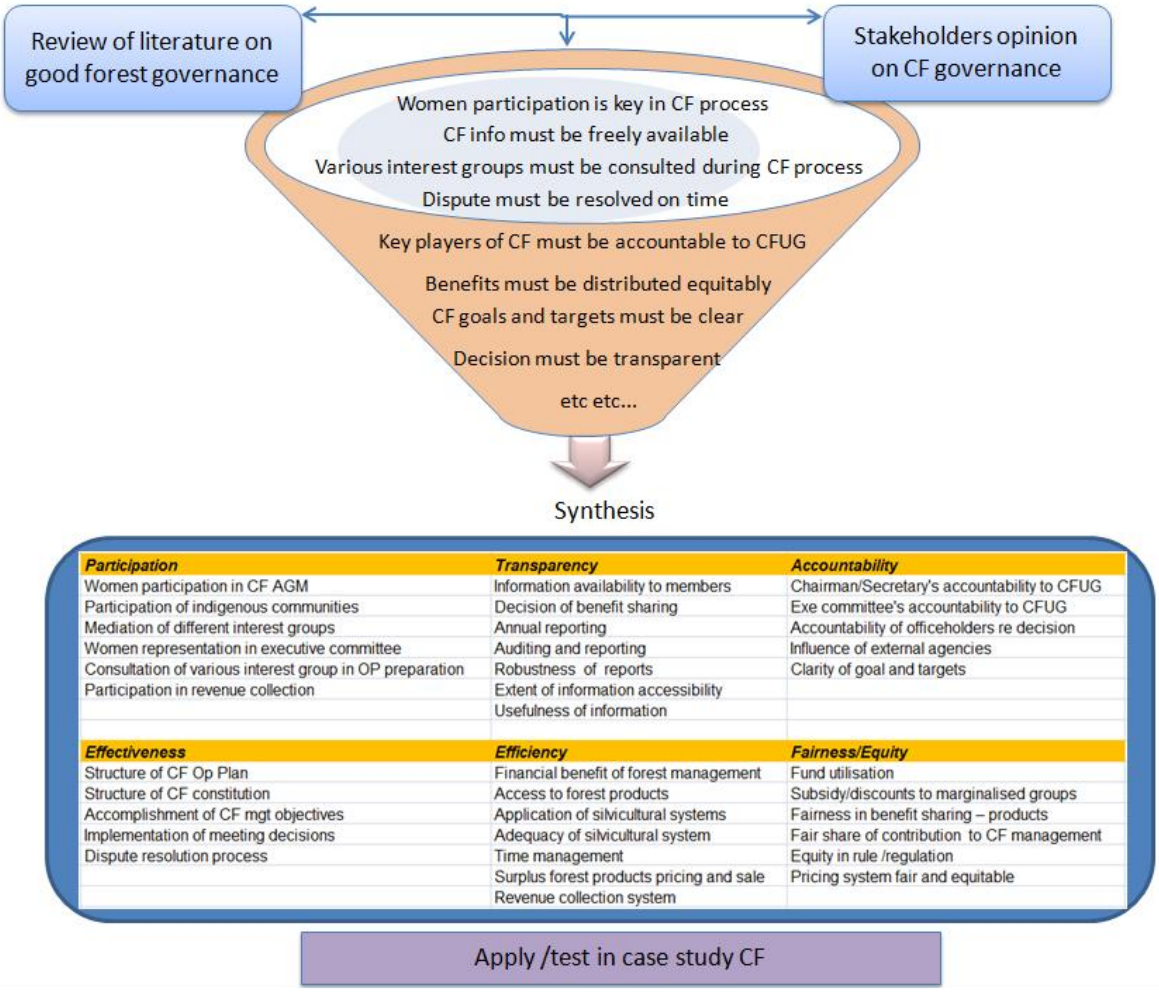


Figure 4-5. Methodological framework for this study (Figure based on FAO, 2011; GFI, 2009; World Bank, 2009 and stakeholders consultation)

From this analysis, a series of indicators have been identified and synthesized under the key elements of governance proposed by FAO. An explanation of what these indicators are and why they have been chosen is provided in the analysis section (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). I employ this framework to assess governance quality in community forestry in Nepal, focusing on nine CFUGs in three districts representing three different ecological zones.

4.4 STUDY AREA AND COMMUNITY FORESTS

This study focuses on three districts in the central and western region representing all of Nepal's ecological zones: Terai, Mid-Hills and High Mountains regions. Altogether nine CFUGs are purposely selected, three from each of the three districts. These are (i) Dolakha District in the High Mountain which borders China to the North; (ii) Lalitpur District neighboring the capital Kathmandu in the North; and (iii) Rupandehi District in the Terai, which borders India to the South (Fig 4-5). Each district represents one of Nepal's three main ecological zones. The study districts also vary in terms of the history of community forestry practice with the Mid-Hills and High Mountains CGUFs located in areas where natural forest was previously destroyed but is now improving with community-based management practices. In contrast, in the Terai region, CF policy is relatively new and Rupandehi District represents a good example of the early introduction of CF activities with the support of international donors.

The key criteria for selecting the nine CFUGs were (i) at least 5 years of community forestry practice, (ii) the composition of CFUG executive committee and general members, (iii) participation of women, (iv) ethnic composition, and (v) number of households. Similarly forest related attributes that influenced the selection included (vi) original forest condition

and forest types, (vii) accessibility (distance from motorable road), and (viii) size of forest and value of timber and non-timber species. The key socio-economic attributes of CFUGs are presented in Table 4-2.

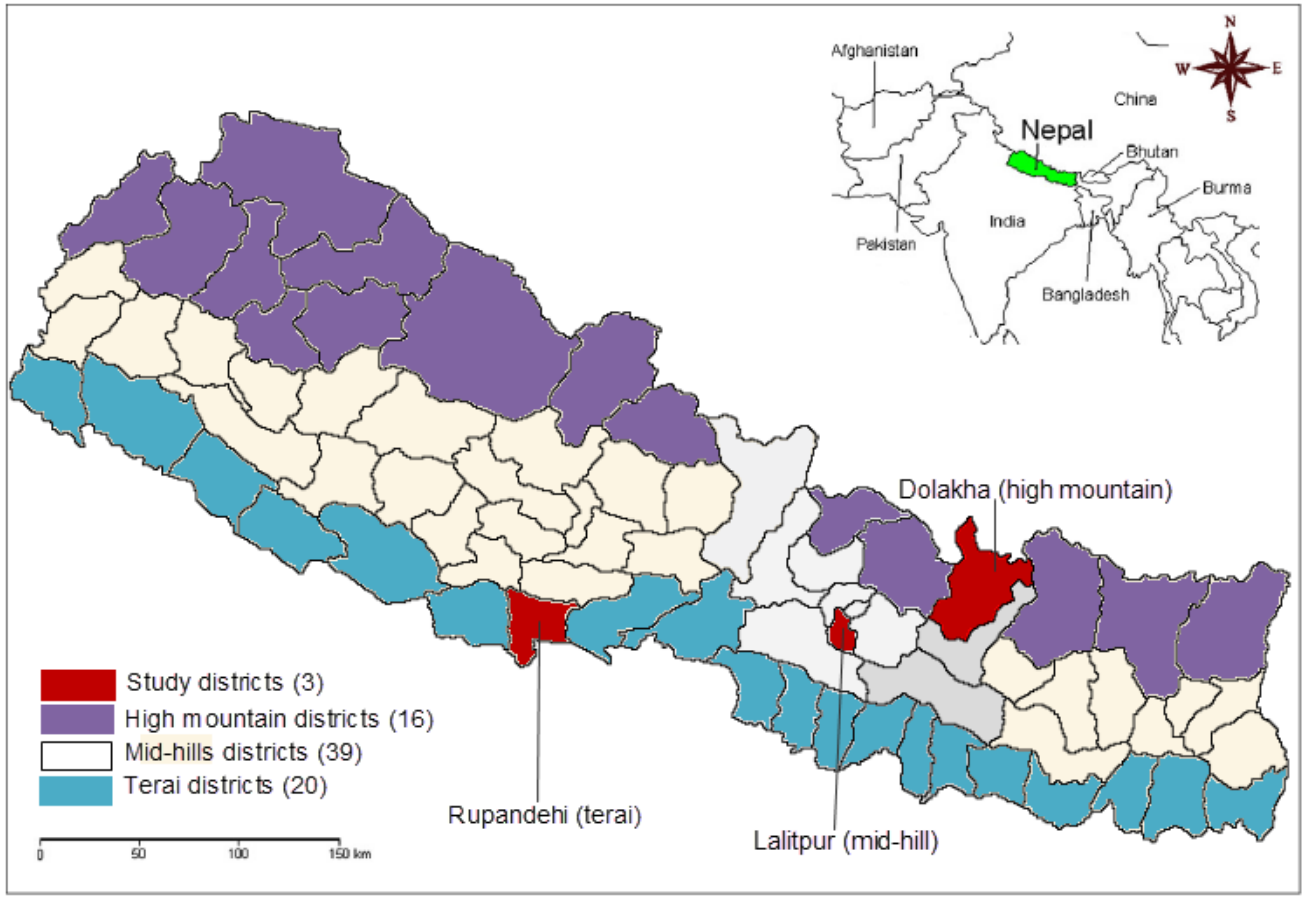


Figure 4-6. Political map of Nepal showing three ecological zones (High Mountains, Mid-hills and Terai) and case study districts from each ecological zones. Three study districts (red) represent Terai (blue) bordering to India, Mid-Hills (light blue), and High Mountain ((Purple) bordering to China.

Table 4-2. Summary table of location and socio-economic information of the nine community forests from three study districts

Ecological zones	**High Mountain**			**Mid Hills**			**Terai**		
District	**Dolakha**			**Lalitpur**			**Rupandehi**		
Name of CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyar Chhyare CF	Godawarikunda CF	Saraswati CF	Bandevi CF	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF
Description	Mixed community, more independent, enough forest to meet their requirement.	Typical mountain village. Far from urban centre	Mixed community with diverse interest.	Close to the capital city and Lalitpur district headquarter	Close to Kathmandu but very conservative and traditional culture	Very close to urban area but very disadvantage community; mainly ethnic groups	Mixed community of Terai Tharu and migrated from hill	Purely Terai Madhesi ethnic community	Purely hill originated migrated community
Location (address)/	Bhimeshwor Municipality 10	Suspachimabati VDC 4 and 7	Bhimeshwor Municipality 7 Gilu Piple	Godawari VDC 5	Lele VDC 1	Badikhel VDC 5	Devdaha VDC 9,8 Bhaluhi	Bishnupura VDC 1,5,6,7,8	Parroha VDC 2,5,6,8 K bangai 3
Number of households in CFUG	135	186	110	130	78	94	306	386	1562
User population	675	935	478	650	468	513	1722	2585	8685
Year of registration	1997	2000	2000	1995	1999	1994	2008	1997	2002
Number of members in the current executive committee	15	13	7	11	11	9	13	21	11
Proportion of female to male executive members	6:9	4:9	5:2	6:5	6:5	4:5	9:4	3:8	3:8

4.5 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY DISTRICTS

4.5.1 DOLAKHA DISTRICT – HIGH MOUNTAIN

Dolakha District is located in the Central Development Region (Fig 4-5). The District lies on north latitude 27º 28" - 28º 0" and east longitude 85º 50" - 86º 32" and the altitude varies from 732m to 7,148m above sea level. The District's headquarters is Charikot, which is 133 km northeast from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Dolakha District was selected because of its experience with community forestry and location within the High Mountain ecological zone. Additionally, this district is a pilot community forestry project area that is supported by a Swiss forestry project called the Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project.

The district covers approximately 2,191 km^2, of which 35 % is High Himalayan Mountains, 40 % High Hills, and 25 % Mid-Hills (DDC, 2011). This District represents a typical Mid-Hills landscape with a variety of ecosystem types (Niraula et al., 2013). The average annual rainfall is 2,043 mm (DDC, 2011). Due to altitudinal variations and local microclimatic effects Dolakha District exhibits remarkably diverse climatic conditions and is rich in bio-diversity and natural resources. The area covered by forest is approximately 47%, which is more than the average for all Nepal, which is 39%. Agriculture land (26 %) and pasture land (13 %) make up the balance (DDC, 2011). The main native tree species are Khote Sallo (*Pinus roxburghii* 45 %), and associated species such as Chilaune (*Schima wallichii* 14 %), Gobre Sallo (*Pinus wallichiana* 12 %), and Sal (*Shorea robusta* 11 %). The balance (18 %) is composed of a variety of other minor species (DDC, 1999).

The District has a variety of ethnic groups and languages. The major ethnic groups and castes are *Bramin, Chhetri, Tamang, Newar, Thami, Sherpa, Kami, Jirel, Damai, Magar and Sharki* (DDC, 2006). Nepali is the major spoken language in the District (more than 70%), followed by Tamang (15%), Sherpa (6%), and Jirel (2%). The major religion is Hindu (71%) with just over a quarter of the population (28%) being Buddhist (DDC, 2006).

A table summarising the socio-economic and biophysical information of the three community forests selected in Dolakha District is provided in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3. Socio-economic and biophysical information of study CFs in Dolakha District in High Mountain

Name of CF	**Sitakunda CF**	**Jhareni CF**	**Chhyar Chhyare CF**
Location (address)	**Bhimeshwor Municipality 10**	**Suspachimabati VDC 4 and 7**	**Bhimeshwor Municipality 7 Gilu Piple.**
Number of households in CFUG	135	186	110
Total Population /User population	n/a	935	478
Year of registration	1997	2000	2000
Number of members in the current executive committee	15	13	12
Proportion of female to male executive members	8:7	4:9	7:5
Ethnic groups	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Forest Area (ha)	154.9	208.85	9.52
Forest type (Natural, Planted, Both)	Both	Both	Both
Main tree species	Chir Pine, Chilaune, Quercus	Gobre, Chir Pine,Chilaune,Uttis,	Chir Pine, Natural Shrub land
Forest condition (Good, medium, poor)	Good	Medium	Poor
Distance to road	500m	570m	500m
Elevation (m asl)	1000-1400	2100-3000	1350-1450

4.5.2 LALITPUR DISTRICT – MIDDLE HILLS

Lalitpur District is located adjacent to the capital city, Kathmandu in the Central Development Region (Fig 4-5). The District lies on north latitude 27° 22' to 28º 50' and east longitude: 27° 22' to 28º 50'. The altitude ranges from 457m from the mean sea level to 2831m. It has 41 Village Development Committees and one sub-metropolitan i.e., Lalitpur sub-metropolitan and the District headquarters is Patan. Due to a significant altitudinal variation and abundant rainfall Lalitpur District exhibits diverse climatic conditions and is rich in bio-diversity and natural resources. Lalitpur District was selected because of a long history of community involvement in the Mid-Hills ecological zone and because it represents urbanised as well as rural populations.

The District covers approximately 38,500 ha, of which agriculture land occupies 15,296 ha (~ 40%), forest occupies 15,253 ha (~40%) and remaining area 7,951 ha (~20%) is occupied by shrubs and grazing land (DDC, 2004). The main native tree species are Sal (*Shorea robusta*), Bamboo (*Bambusa spp*), Katus (*Castanopsis spp*), Chilaune (*Schima wallichii*), Uttis (*Alnus nepalensis*), Khasru (Quercus species), Khote Sallo (*Pinus roxburghii*), Gobre Sallo (*Pinus wallichiana*), and Paiu (*Prunus species*) (DDC, 2004). A large number of wildlife is found in the District including the endangered Spiny babbler (*Turdoides nipalensis*). Other important wildlife species include leopards, bears, deers, and a variety of birds and reptiles. The District is also rich in medicinal and aromatic plants such as Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), Gurjo (*Tinospora sinensis*), Dhasingre (*Gaultheria fragrantissima*), Tejpatta (*Cinnamomum tamala*), Jatamasi (*Nardostachys grandiflora*), Pakhanved (*Bergania ciliate*), and Jethimadhu (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) (DDC, 2004).

The District has a variety of ethnic groups and languages. The major ethnic groups and castes are *Bhramin, Chhetri, Newar*, and *Tamang* (DDC, 2004). A brief summary table showing socio-economic and biophysical information of the three community forests selected in Lalitpur District is depicted in Table 4-4.

Table 4-4. Socio-economic and biophysical information of study CF in Lalitpur District in Mid-hills

Name of CF	**Godawarikunda CF**	**Saraswati CF**	**Bandevi CF**
Location	**Godawari VDC 5**	**Lele VDC 1**	**Badikhel VDC 5**
Number of households in CFUG	130	78	94
User population	650	468	513
Year of registration	1995	1999	1994
Number of members in the current executive committee	11	11	9
Proportion of female to male executive members	6:5	6:5	4:5
Ethnic groups	Mixed	More *Dalit*	Pahari (Bamboo materials making caste)
Forest Area (ha)	147	9.75	89.9
Forest type (Natural, Planted, Both)	Natural	Both	Both
Main tree species	Chileune, Katus	Pine	Chirpine, Blue pine, Katus
Forest condition (Good, medium, poor)	Good	Medium	Good
Distance to road	500m	500m	0.5km
Elevation (m asl)	1650 – 1750m	1600-1793m	1450m

4.5.3. RUPANDEHI DISTRICT – TERAI

Rupandehi District is located in the Western Development Region of Nepal (Fig 4-7). The District lies between 27º 20' N and 27º 45' N latitude, and 83 º 10' E and 83 º 30' E longitude. The District headquarters is Bhairahawa which is located 270 Km south West of Kathmandu. Rupandehi District contains very high value timber species and is located between the foothills and the Nepal-India border, a region where the land is almost flat and is popularly known as 'Terai'. Community forestry programs are relatively new but becoming increasingly popular in Terai so this District was selected to understand the CF status in Terai.

The District covers approximately 136,770 ha out of which agriculture land, urban regions, and roads cover about 73%, forest covers 23% and the remaining 4% is occupied by water bodies (i.e., rivers) (CBS, 2008). Rupandehi District experiences a sub-tropical type of climate with an average minimum temperature of 22º C in January and average maximum temperature of 36 º C in June (CBS, 2008). The average annual average precipitation is approximately 2,220 mm (OFMP, 1995). Out of the total forests, 58% is protection forests, 22% production forests and the remaining 20 % potential community/leasehold forests. The forests of the District have been categorized into three distinct types: Sal, Terai Hardwoods and Sissoo-Khair (OFMP, 1995).

Rupandehi represents a district with a high population growth rate (3.05%) coupled with relatively low literacy rate (46%). The District has a variety of ethnic groups and languages and the major ethnic groups and castes are *Tharu, Brahmin, Yadav, Chetri, Musalman, Lodh, Gurung, Newar, Harijan, Kewat, Kurmi, Mallah, Damai, Kami,* and *Sarki* (CBS, 2008). Major occupations of the people of Rupandehi are agriculture 80%, business 7%, industry

3%, and others 10% (CBS, 2008). A brief summary table showing socio-economic and biophysical information of three community forests selected in Rupandehi District is depicted in Table 4-5.

Table 4-5. Socio-economic and biophysical information of study CF in Rupandehi District in Terai

Name of CF	**Janapriya CF**	**Navadurga CF**	**Saina Maina CF**
Location (address)/	**Devdaha VDC 9,8 Bhaluhi**	**Bishnupura VDC 1,5,6,7,8**	**Parroha VDC 2,5,6,8 Bangai VDC 3**
Number of households in CFUG	306	386	1562
Total Population /User population	1722	2585	8685
Year of registration	2066	1997	2002
Number of members in the current executive committee	13	21	11
Proportion of female to male executive members	9:4	13:8	3:8
Ethnic groups	Mixed	Mixed	n/a
Forest Area (ha)	190	197.33	688
Forest type (Natural, Planted, Both)	Natural	Natural + 5ha Sisso Plantation	Natural
Main tree species	Sal, Asna, Karma, Jamun, Jhingad	Sal, Siso	Sal, Asna, Satisal, Bajhi, Bot Dhaero
Forest condition (Good, medium, poor)	Good	Poor	Medium
Distance to road	100m	200m	500m
Elevation (m asl)	300 – 500	250 - 500	300 - 550

4.6 DATA COLLECTION

4.6.1 THE DATA SOURCES

Quantitative data were collected in the form of a structured questionnaire, where answers were collected during a household survey. The qualitative data were collected in the form of further comments and clarifications within the structured questionnaire or in field notes collected during the household survey. The respondents' expressions, comments, observations and feelings were reproduced through their 'words', both in the household survey questionnaire and field notes, to the best of the researcher's ability. Both the questionnaire and field notes were written in Nepali language, which is the native language of the researcher and also the participants.

4.4.2 PRIMARY DATA

4.6.2.1 INTERVIEWS WITH INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS

Interviews are recommended as good sources of information in a case study (Patton, 2002). Semi-structured interviews with individual households were carried out in order to gather information about their experiences and opinions with regard to the factors influencing their access to the forests. Bryman (2001) notes that a semi-structured interview is a suitable interview method to address more specific issues and also to provide some structure to ensure cross-case analysis. The purpose of these interviews was to explore the access of the rural poor to forests from the perspective of the interviewees, and to understand how and why the interviewees came to have their particular perspectives.

4.6.2.2 PARTICIPANT SELECTION FOR INTERVIEW

Fifteen members from each CFUG were selected for interview, representing a range of groups (women, poor, elite, and so forth). Participants from each sub-group were selected at random from a list of CFUG members. Altogether 135 participants were recruited and interviewed as shown in Table 4-6.

The expressions and views of the interviewees were recorded as field notes and in their own words. Both the researcher and assistant took field notes and compared them in order to reduce the bias from a single interpretation (O'Leary, 2004). Another strategy used to reduce researcher bias was that the key points were verified with the interviewee at the end of each interview (Patton, 2002).

Table 4-6. Numbers of household interviewees showing men, women and indigenous communities from various CFUGs

Ecological zones	**High Mountain**			**Mid Hills**			**Terai**		
Study Districts	**Dolakha**			**Lalitpur**			**Rupandehi**		
Name of CF	Sitakunda CF	Chhayre Chhayre CF	Jhereni CF	Godawari Kunda CF	Saraswoti CF	Bandevi CF	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF
Total number of interview	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
Men	10	7	8	10	10	12	7	8	5
Women	5	8	7	5	5	3	8	7	10
Member representing indigenous communities*	2	4	0	4	8	15	5	8	5

*member of indigenous communities are either male or female

4.6.2.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Krueger (1988) described a focus group discussion as a powerful means for gaining opinions and beliefs of a particular group of people. Focus group discussions were employed in order to understand whether people of different socioeconomic categories had different access to the forest. Focus groups are suitable to record the experiences of all people, even those who are normally left out in general group discussions in Nepalese society (Waldegrave, 2003). A focus group is defined as a group of people with a similar background on a specific topic (Waldegrave, 2003). A total of 10 focus group discussions were carried out in the communities (Table 4-7). Separate focus groups were arranged for specific groups of local key informants (e.g. female, low caste members, poor members, ethnic group members.). A key advantage of such focus groups was that people having the same background feel more at ease in interacting with each other (Greenbaum, 1993), and such group interaction generates a variety of views and stimulates the discussion of new perspectives (Morgan, 1997; Gray, 2004).

Table 4 -7. List of focus group discussions carried out in various CFUGs

Categories of Participants	Number of Focus Groups
Women users	2
Janajati users	2
Mixed group	2
Low caste users	2
Local key informants	1
	1

The order and the way of asking the questions were adjusted to fit the specific group situation. This type of semi-structured guideline has advantages in terms of flexibility, which motivates the participants to express their experiences (Finch and Lewis, 2003). A team of two people (the researcher and an assistant) facilitated the focus group discussions. The team exchanged the roles of facilitating and note taking in the series of discussions across focus groups.

Figure 4-7. Photos showing active focus group discussion in Chhyar Chhyare CF in Dolakha District (Photo taken with permission from focus group participants).

4.6.2.4 PARTICIPANT/FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Observation is one of the major means of collecting field data in a qualitative research study. Various scholars claim that observation allows the researcher to understand the behaviour of people and the processes in a context that was more natural than formal interviews (Lindsay, 1997;Schutt, 2006). According to Merriam (1998:111):

> Observation offers a first hand account of the situation under study and, when combined with interviewing and document analysis, allows for a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon being investigated.

Participant and field observation usually always takes place in community settings, in locations in and around study site. In this study, field observations supplemented the data collected in household interviews, focus group discussions, and from documents. Observation was also used to triangulate emerging findings from the interviews and document analysis. This observation technique provided the researcher with an opportunity to observe the participation of people representing different socioeconomic categories, positions and gender in meetings (such as general assembly, executive committee meeting, group meeting, etc.). The researcher attended two general meetings of the executive committee of Sitakunda CFUG and Bandevi CFUG. The researcher observed and recorded data without predetermined observation schedules or checklists. The researcher took detailed field notes of her observations, and included descriptions, direct quotations, and her own comments in the field notes. Data from the observations contributed to the results. In addition, pictures were taken of community forest operations and associated features. For example, a typical agricultural landscape is shown in Figure 4-8.

Figure 4-8. A typical agricultural landscape in the study area. Trees on farm help to fulfil some basic needs reducing pressure on community forests

4.6.3 SECONDARY DATA

Reviewing documents is a key source of information. Merriam (1998:126) notes, ‘data from documents are particularly good sources for qualitative case studies because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated’. Policy documents provided useful information on forest policies and the government’s implementation strategies, part of the context of the research problem for this study. Documents collected from the relevant government agencies and NGOs provided useful preliminary information for understanding the social, economic and political context at the national level. Operational plans and the constitutions of the CFUGs provided information about the formal rules and rights of forest management. Data from these documents were also used as a means of triangulating the data from focus group discussions and interviews.

4.7 FIELD VISIT FOR DATA COLLECTION

A total of four months were allocated for the field research which included a first preliminary field visit of one months and second field visit of approximately three months. Prior to the first field trip, two weeks were spent for field visit planning, preparation and communication. The preliminary field visit took place mainly in Kathmandu and focused on the secondary information collection which included the following: formal and informal discussions with government officials, forestry-sector donor agencies/projects and relevant I/NGOs; and the identification of potential study areas.

The second field visit involved communicating with the selected CFUGs, the DFOs, project organisations and NGOs; the recruitment and training of local researchers for data collection; and the pre-testing and finalisation of the project questionnaire, its translation into Nepali and

printing. A detailed schedule of the household survey and other qualitative data collection methods, including individual and group interviews, was prepared after communication with the CFUGs involved.

Another seven weeks were spent in the field conducting the household survey, the key informants interviews and focus group discussions, in addition to observing group meetings and other group activities. Both the household survey and other qualitative information collections were generally conducted by the researcher herself with help from an assistant. Following the field work, approximately three weeks were spent checking the questionnaires and coding the answers, in addition to sharing the initial findings with local experts from government offices, forestry-sector donor agencies/projects and relevant NGOs, in order to gather their feedback, comments and suggestions. In addition, any remaining secondary information was collected at this time.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

4.8.1 DATA CHECKING AND ENTRY

The quantitative data collected from the initial household survey using the structured questionnaire was carefully checked and coded before being transferred to a computer. The qualitative data, collected via additional feedback, comments and informal discussions, was edited and entered in bullet form and triangulated from different sources, in order to validate them.

4.8.2 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the characteristics of both the survey and sample populations. These included the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of households, in terms of existing participation in group activities and other variables. Descriptive statistics, such as percentage and mean, were used to summarise and present the analysed data. The results were presented in the form of a bar diagram, and spider-diagram using the Excel computer program. The reliability and validity of quantitative data is likely to be moderate due to the somewhat small sample of each CFUG.

4.8.3 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis involves moving back and forth iteratively between the original data and the conceptualisation, abstraction and interpretation derived from the data (Spencer et al., 2003). According to Schutt (2006) the qualitative data analysis helps the researcher to generate concepts and make linkages, in order to discover whether the concepts and interpretations made are reflected in the process.

Firstly, the qualitative data and notes were collected in bullet form, and the comments and explanations thoroughly considered. While the use of qualitative data analysis software, such as N-VIVO, can be useful for managing large volumes of of qualitative data, in this study the moderate amount of data was analysed manually.

4.9 ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONFIDENTIALITY

This research followed the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Tasmania Network's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research. Initial thoughts were to interview key informants from government agencies and NGOs involved with community forestry therefore minimal ethics approval was obtained. However, given the comprehensive nature of study and detailed questionnaire full human ethics approval was obtained from HREC Tasmania. Obtaining full ethics approval was major hurdle associated to this study which took more than three months and several reviews. To meet ethics requirements, a series of processes were followed during this research as outlined in the next paragraph.

The participants in this research were provided with an information sheet which outlined the researcher's background, project description and invitation to participate, participant identification and selection criteria, project procedures, including time involved, data management, and a statement of participant's rights to decline to participate (Annex II). The information sheet also includes the contact details of the researcher and supervisors for the participants to make contact, if they had any questions about the project.

Participants were invited to participate in the research and their informed consent was obtained. The consent form included the title of the research and the time period for retaining the signed form (a minimum of five years from the research completion date). It also includes the participant's statement agreeing to participate in the research and the participant's full name, signature and date.

Data is being stored on the researcher's, password protected computer hard drive which is locked away while not in use. According to Human Research Ethics Committee Tasmania Network's guideline after the completion of this research, the data will be placed in the safe-

keeping of the researcher and it will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisors. The data will be stored for 5 years after completion of the study and then destroyed.

4.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has given an overview of the conceptual, analytical and methodological framework, study area and site selection for this study. The chapter reviewed some conceptual underpinnings of governance associated with forestry and natural resource management applicable in the Nepalese context. It also reviewed and synthesized different forms of governance frameworks offered by various international organizations and a new methodological framework was developed for assessing forest governance focusing on participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and fairness/equity.

A mixed approach was employed using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to analyse community forest governance in Nepal. Quantitative data were collected to construct and analyse basic descriptive statistics in order to estimate the status of various elements of governance. The primary survey provided the necessary quantitative and some qualitative information to evaluate the governance status of the study CFs. A number of indicators under each governance element were employed using a simple numeric ranking. To operationalise the approach, a user group member household was used as the lowest unit of analysis in this study.

Quantitative analysis is considered to be insufficient, however, for a comprehensive analysis of the issues, and thus qualitative data were collected from the field, in order to triangulate the data and gain an understanding of the institutional settings and overall governance and management practices and performances of the selected user groups. Focus group

discussions, key informants interviews, and informal discussions/observations were carried out, to collect the requisite qualitative information.

This study was carried out in three Districts located in three physiographic zones of Nepal, namely Terai, Middle Hills and High Mountains of Nepal and the results are reported out in the three ensuring chapters (in Chapter 5, 6 and 7).

CHAPTER 5: ASSESSING DECENTRALISED COMMUNITY BASED FOREST GOVERNANCE – PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Of the six key elements of forest governance—participation, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and fairness/equity--this chapter presents the results of the study focusing on the first two, participation and transparency. First brief descriptions of household characteristics are presented; then, the two elements of governance are assessed using a variety of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The household survey provided the necessary quantitative information for assessing the level of participation while focus group discussions, key informant interviews and informal discussions/observations were used to collect the qualitative information.

5.2 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

The household has been taken as the unit of data collection and analysis. A brief description of these household characteristics is helpful to understand the socio-economic status of the forest users being studied and to explain how these characteristics may influence users' perceptions concerning incentives and participation in the governance of their community forest resources.

5.2.1 GENDER OF THE HOUSEHOLD HEAD

The majority of the surveyed households (67%) are headed by males (Figure 5-1). This is mainly due to the Hindu religion and the patriarchal socio-cultural structure that prevails in the study districts, in which women are subordinate to men, both at the household and community level. The women-headed households are those by a single woman or where male members have gone away from home, usually in search of a job.

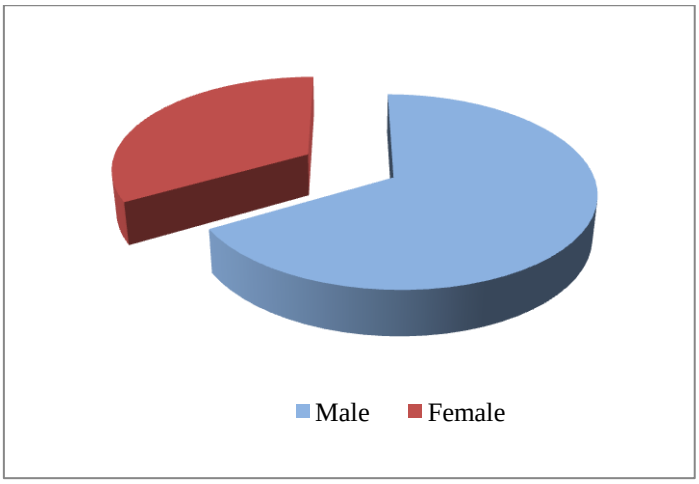


Figure 5-1 Proportion of Respondents by Gender

5.2.2 THE WELLBEING RANKING

The respondents are categorised into three socio-economic classes in terms of relative poverty. These are poor, medium and well-off groups based on local criteria of wellbeing. The major criteria used, as outlined by Gentle and Maraseni (2012) in their study area in the High Mountain District of Nepal, are food sufficiency, land ownership (amount and quality), education, income, employment and financial loans. The results (Figure 5-2) show that, from the total number of respondents, the highest proportion (53%) came from the medium socioeconomic class, followed by the poor (27%) and the well-off (20%).

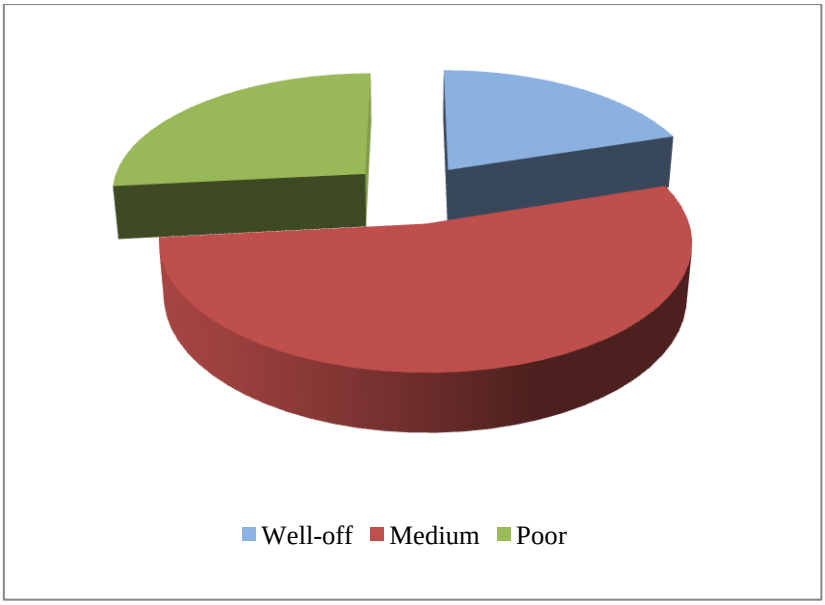


Figure 5-2 Socio-economic class of respondents

5.2.3 CASTE GROUP COMPOSITION

The respondents were categorised into three broad groups according to caste as recognised by the Government of Nepal: high caste, *Janajatis* and lower caste (*Dalits*). The caste system is deeply rooted in Hindu society and is based on four primary divisions (Rao, 2010; Shrestha, 2002). *Brahmins*, *Chhetries* and *Thakuris* are categorised as high caste, and *Sudras* as lower caste (Rao, 2010). The *Janajatis* include the forty-four ethnic groups identified as *Janajatis* in the 2001 population census. The lower caste, or *Dalits*, includes sixteen groups representing low Hindu castes, who suffer most through discrimination based on this hierarchical Hindu caste system (CBS, 2002).

Data analysis shows that the majority of respondent households are from the higher caste (73%), followed by *Janajatis* (13%) and *Dalits* (13%) (Figure 5-3).

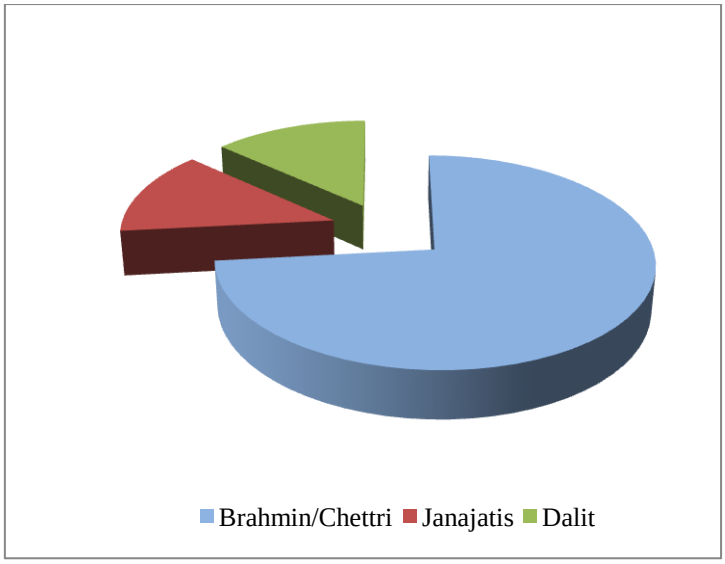


Figure 5-3 Caste composition of respondents in the study CF

5.2.4 INCOME SOURCES

The major income sources of the households are summarised in Figure 5-4. Agriculture (including forestry) is reported as the main occupation and hence the main source of income by 47% of households. Similarly, government service and business are reported to be the second major source of income for 20% of households, followed by remittances received from foreign employment (13%).

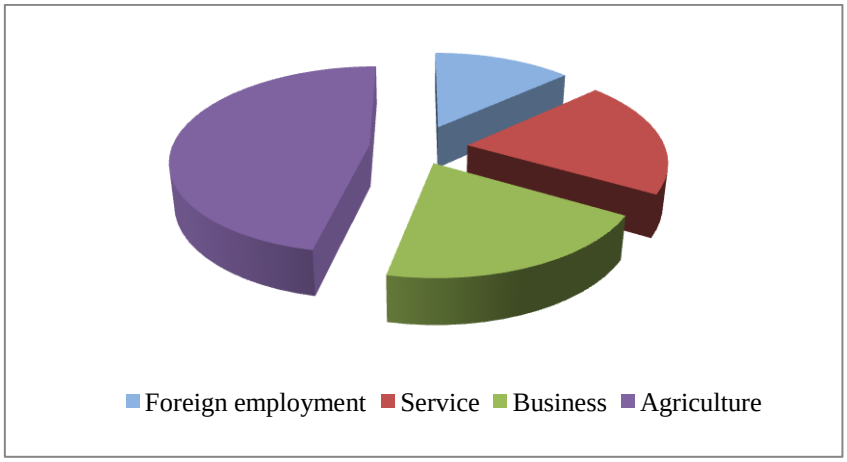


Figure 5-4 Major source of income of the respondents in the study CF

5.3 ELEMENTS OF GOVERNANCE: PARTICIPATION

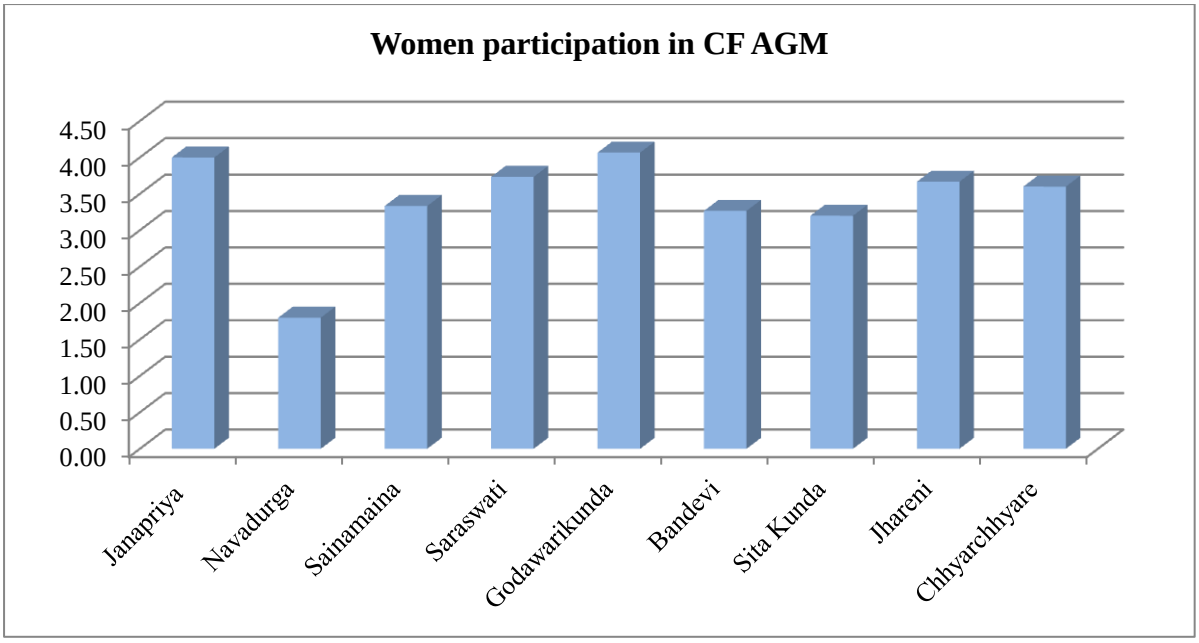
The participation of people is a key element of forest governance and it is even more difficult to initiate change without the inclusion and participation of excluded or marginalised groups in local governance (Agarwal, 2001). Participation has long been viewed by development scholars and practitioners as a crucial element that allows poor and marginalized groups to influence institutions and decisions that critically affect their lives (Mayoux, 1995). Particularly in the community forestry sector, participation has been viewed as a pathway towards improving good forest governance, promoting sustainable use and management, while securing livelihood benefits and opportunities for local communities.

The involvement of people in executive committees (EC) and assembly meetings is important, especially when it comes to the preparation of the operational plan (OP). It is hypothesised that assembly meetings that encourage participation in the preparation of the OP provide more benefits to poor and disadvantaged people. CFUG assembly meetings are more relevant than the EC meetings in influencing the preparation of the OP, CF constitution and management of the CF. This is because, when the majority of EC members belong to the elite and wealthier households, the EC will not reflect the needs and aspirations of the poorer and socially disadvantaged members (Thoms, 2008). Nayak and Berkes (2008) found that assembly meetings were more representative of the diversity of communities and there was less chance of elite dominance. Hence, the more involved the assembly in the preparation of the OP including forest management, harvesting, and protection, the greater is the chance that the benefits will be shared fairly compared with involvement in only the EC.

In this study, participants' perceptions of governance with regard to the participation element were assessed by examining six different indicators. These were women's participation in annual general meeting (AGM) and positions on executive committees, participation of ethnic groups in various CF activities, mediation of numerous interests in CF decision making process, meaningful participation by users in revenue collection, and consultation with CF users and other concerned stakeholders on the CFUG constitution and CF operational plan.

5.3.1. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Women's participation in CF activities is viewed as a crucial element for successful implementation. A CFUG's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is an important event in CF processes because it approves the constitution and operational plan and also elects the executive committee. Women collect forest products from CFs and these products play an important role in their daily household activities. Therefore women's participation, either directly or through legitimate representatives, is a key cornerstone of good governance. To participate effectively, women need to be well informed and well organised, and free to express themselves about any concerns they have. Household survey results indicate different levels of participation in different CFUGs. Navadurga CFUG in Terai showed the lowest level of women participation in the CFUG's AGM, while Janapriya CFUG (Rupandehi District and Godawarikunda CF (Lalitpur) indicated the highest level of women's participation in AGMs (see Figure 5-5).



(**Source**: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-5. Participation of Women in CF annual general meeting (AGM) in study CFs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of participation (5 highest and 1 lowest) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain(right) shown in X-axis.

The Household Survey indicated a range of different views of women members regarding their participation in AGM. They cited the male dominated culture, involvement in household chores, and the unwillingness of elites to listen to women's voices as some of the key reasons for their lack of interest in attending CF AGMs. Further, the situation of women in Terai is also critical. *Madhesi communities* (people live in Terai) do not allow women to participate in public. A *Madhesi* woman, for example, from Navadurga CF explained the socio-cultural nexus that informally restricts her participation and opportunities to raise her concerns at a CFUG AGM:

> In my opinion, social and cultural factors associated to Madheshi communities (people live in lowland) is key factor for lower women participation in CF activities. Due to traditional cultural beliefs of Madheshi ethnic group of Nepal, women are not allowed to go outside the house and participate in social meetings and social events (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi).

In spite of many changes in the modern Nepalese society, a strong belief endures within *Madheshi* communities that women should not be allowed to participate publicly in meetings with male members. This issue was also raised by focus group participants and was also understood during the household survey. In addition to this cultural belief, women's household chores and limited awareness regarding forest rules and regulations among *Madhesi* women also limited their participation in CFUG AGMs. Women members of Navadurga CFUG of Terai expressed their dissatisfaction over men's claims regarding their capability and time availability to work in CF:

> ...other factors associated with lower participation are that male users think that women don't know anything about forest rules and regulations. In addition we (women) are very busy cooking food, looking after kids and husband and in-laws... there is lot of work pending at home so how can we go to attend the meeting? Even if we go to attend the meeting with husband, we have nothing to say in the meetings and when we get back home we have to do all household duties... (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi).

In contrast to above, women are active participants in Middle Hills of Nepal where a number of CFs were run by female members alone. In other cases, there is equal participation of male and female members. The key reasons for such a high level of female participation varies across CFUGs, as the following two interviewees explain:

> Forest products such as fuel wood, fodder and bedding material for cattle is mostly collected by us and we know the importance of these goods and services. Therefore we think women are more attached to the forest than males and forests are best conserve when managed by women...we have to go to AGM to express our interests (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur).

> Men usually go to work either locally or overseas for employment and we need forest products for our daily use... further many NGOs and CBOs have helped to create awareness regarding importance of women's participation in community forestry activities which has motivated us to participate in AGM and other forestry related meetings and training (Interviewee, Jhareni CF, Dolakha).

A division of labour between men and women still exists in Nepalese society. Men usually seek outside employment to earn money while women remain responsible for managing the daily household activities and family. In such a situation, active participation of women is most apparent in CFUG AGMs.

5.3.2 PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Article 169 of the International Labour Organisation of the United Nations highlights the right of indigenous nationalities (INs) to participate in forest management activities and obtain benefits from forests. Furthermore, Nepal's CF Guidelines (2008) also state that participation of indigenous communities (*Janajati*) in CFs is regarded as a means of strengthening governance and improving the livelihoods of forest users. The Guidelines note this can be achieved through:

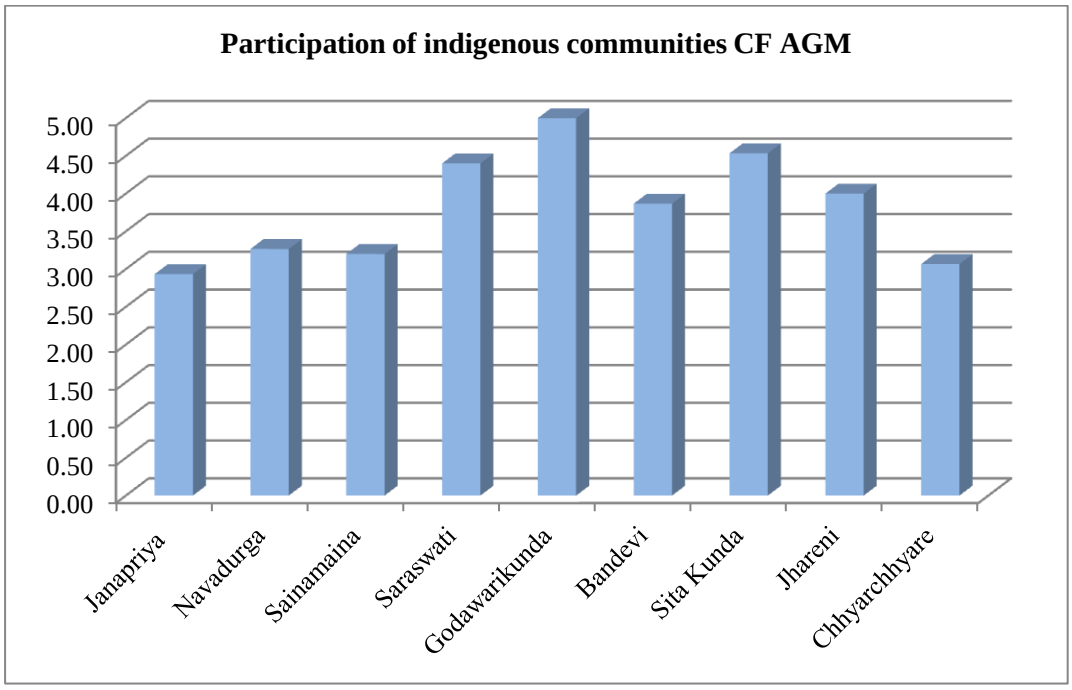
> Improved access to information, resources/benefits and decision-making; improved social and political gains; improved accountability of decision-makers towards general users; and improved conditions of resources and associated forest goods and services (CF guidelines, 2008).

In many cases indigenous communities participate to protect forests as they are highly dependent to them; it is also the case that ethnic groups are located close to the forests while high caste groups are located close to town centers and road heads.

Respondents of Godawarikunda, Saraswoti and Sitakunda CFUGs stated that they had ensured participation of indigenous nationalities and accommodated their voices in CF

management (Figure 5-6). They perceived that the executive committee encouraged them to participate in various CF activities and to put their views at meetings:

> Most of the users are Janajati (Tamang). The EC encourages us to participate and put our voices in CF meetings and interactions. So, we have been involving in protecting forests since past and we also dependent mostly on the forests for daily needs. We are very interested in forestry activities including AGM (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-6. Participation of ethnic groups in CF AGMs in study CFs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of participation of ethnic groups (5, highest and 1, lowest) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis

In contrast, poor participation of ethnic communities was observed in Janapriya, Navadurga, Sainamaina and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs. These CFUGs experienced more domination from high caste members. Respondents from INs stated that high caste groups did not consider their concerns when they arose in meetings and at AGMs. For example, one member of an ethnic community noted:

> ... I attended the AGM many times in the past but I felt uncomfortable at the way the meeting was organised as I could not get opportunity to put my issues ... even when I

> got opportunity to tell, my voice was not heard by the elite so I thought it is best to do my work rather than wasting time to attend the CF meetings including AGM... (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupendehi District).

The study finds that most of members from Indigenous Nationalities have been heavily involved in CF management in Mid Hills and High Mountain, while there is much lower involvement in Terai region. The research finding concluded that role of indigenous nationalities is essential in decision making process because of their proximity of CFs and because their livelihoods depend on forests and forest-based small traditional enterprises.

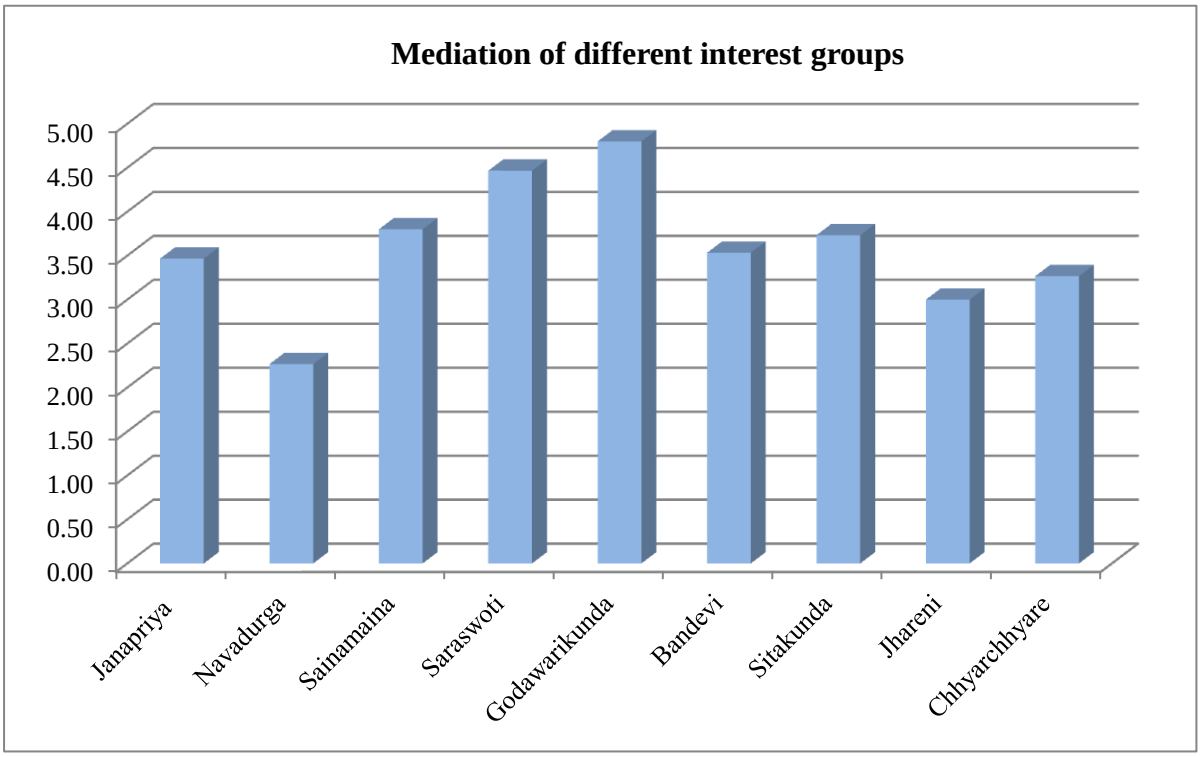
5.3.3 MEDIATION OF DIFFERENT INTEREST GROUPS

CFUG members contribute to forestry activities to secure access to forest resources. Different groups participate in forest management for different reasons. For example, women are interested in ensuring the supply of fuelwood and fodder, while men are interested in timber production for construction. Poor members, on the other hand, are interested in the collection of minor forest products and income generation activities.

Some CFUGs are able to mediate different interest groups at AGMs ensuring that everyone's interests are protected; other CFUGs, however, are not able to do so. This study finds significant variation in the level of such mediation in different CFUGs (Figure 5-7). Respondents from Godawarikunda and Saraswoti CFUG stated that interest mediation was fairly successful and taken as an example for others in the District.

As stated by one of the key members of the District Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN, Lalitpur), contesting interests of forest management can be addressed easily through participation of conflicting interest groups in decision making processes.

> I visit once in a year to Saraswoti CFUG at the time of AGM. Managing contesting interests of fuelwood, timber and other forest products from a comparatively small forest area is always challenging. However, I personally discuss with those members of different interest and found that the CF executive committee is efficiently managing these interests in decision making process. The chairperson and secretary of the CFUG take a lead role to manage such interests. They provide options for mediation and allow members of interest groups for critical discussion and take an appropriate decision. They facilitate the meeting and call us as a witness. I recommend other CFUGs of the district to follow them (Informal discussion with member of District FECOFUN, Lalitpur).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-7. Mediation of different interest groups in various community forests. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of participation (5, respondents strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis

However, respondents from Bandevi, Jhareni and Navadurga indicated that they are not satisfied with the current state of mediation processes being practiced in their CFUGs. A member of Chhyarchhyare CFUG said:

> We are not far from city, but capacity of committee is very poor. Only degraded forests are given us from where our demands cannot be made. Thula bada manchhe (rich and social elite people) want to protect forests by restricting the access to the forests for 5 years. Many of them either use LP gas or they can bring firewood from their own lands. But, we poor members need firewood to cook and need to access community forests. We put our concerns to the executive committee, which is headed by women and is positive to our concerns. However, Thula bada manchhe come and quarrel every time in the meeting and committee cannot take proper decision. I feel that our CF is serving rich people instead of its principles. We are requesting DFO office, district FECOFUN for mediation. Let's see if any support will be given by them (Interviewee, Chhyarchhyare CFUG, and Dolakha District).

The empirical results of the study show that a timely and appropriate mediation system enhances the overall performance of community participation in CF management. Some CFUGs invite a representative from DFO and FECOFUN to the mediation process which helps make it smoother and more transparent.

5.3.4 WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION ON EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

Representation on a CFUG executive committee (EC) is another clear indicator of users' level of participation in the governance of community forests. Studies reveal that EC members participate more in the governance of their groups than non-EC members (Pokharel et al., 2012) and may gain more benefits.

As per Nepal's new community forestry Guidelines, half of executive committee members should be women who should also hold at least one of the key positions such as chairperson or secretary. However, in many cases these guidelines are not implemented due to male domination, cultural beliefs and so forth. In the case of one of the well-functioning CFUG in this study (i.e., Godawarikunda CFUG) six of eleven executive committee members are women (see Table 4-2).

However, in some of these better performing CFUGs, women's inclusion is indicative of a desire to obey the rules and their voice is not heard much at meetings. However, women representatives did not express discontent with these committees. A woman executive committee member of Sitakunda CFUG put her view as follows:

> Women involvement in executive committee is increasing these days compared to 10 year ago. I feel that male members of our CFUG have been changed. I am happy that they hear our voice and concerns. We are interested to work on executive committee but we cannot avoid our domestic responsibilities for the meeting. Sometime I feel that we are double loaded. However, male members do not care much in domestic affairs and easily attend the meeting. Sometime, male members finish discussion before I arrive and I feel that they are avoiding me systematically. However, I mostly agree on their decisions. I want committee should understand our problem and request for special arrangement (Women committee member of Sitakunda CFUG, Dolakha District).

(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-8. Representation of Women in executive committee[2]. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of participation (5, 50% or more female participation in the executive committee and 1, less than 20% of women in the executive committee) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

[2] As the actual number of women on executive committees varies from time to time,female participation is rated on a 1-5 scale rather than simply using the absolute number from the HH survey which only captures the situation at a particular point in time.

In contrast, in Navadurga and Sainamaina CFUGs from Rupandehi and Bandevi CF from Lalitpur showed very poor to poor representation of women on executive committees. The FGDs of various CFUGs in Terai show that women representation in committee is considered a legal burden for them and including women on the committee is just to abide by the law without any intension of giving them a platform for active participation. A women member of Navadurga CFUG explained her perceptions of why she thought this was the case:

> Elite members of CF want themselves to be always in CF executive position. They just keep women on the committee to obey the CF Guidelines and to show there is women participation to the District Forest Office. But, they (elite members) give more priority to men than women. They think women's duty is to look after only domestic work and look after kids. Moreover, we are just listeners while in meetings. They do not listen us when we put our concerns. Therefore we are discouraged in participation of executive committee meeting (Women Interviewee, Navadurga CF, Rupandehi District).

This empirical study shows that female representation on executive committees is increasing in Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions, but there remains a challenge to make their involvement productive. Capacity building in managerial skill enhancement and special provisions for women will be important to foster their more active participation.

5.3.5 CONSULTATION OF INTEREST GROUPS IN CF CONSTITUTION AND OP PREPARATION

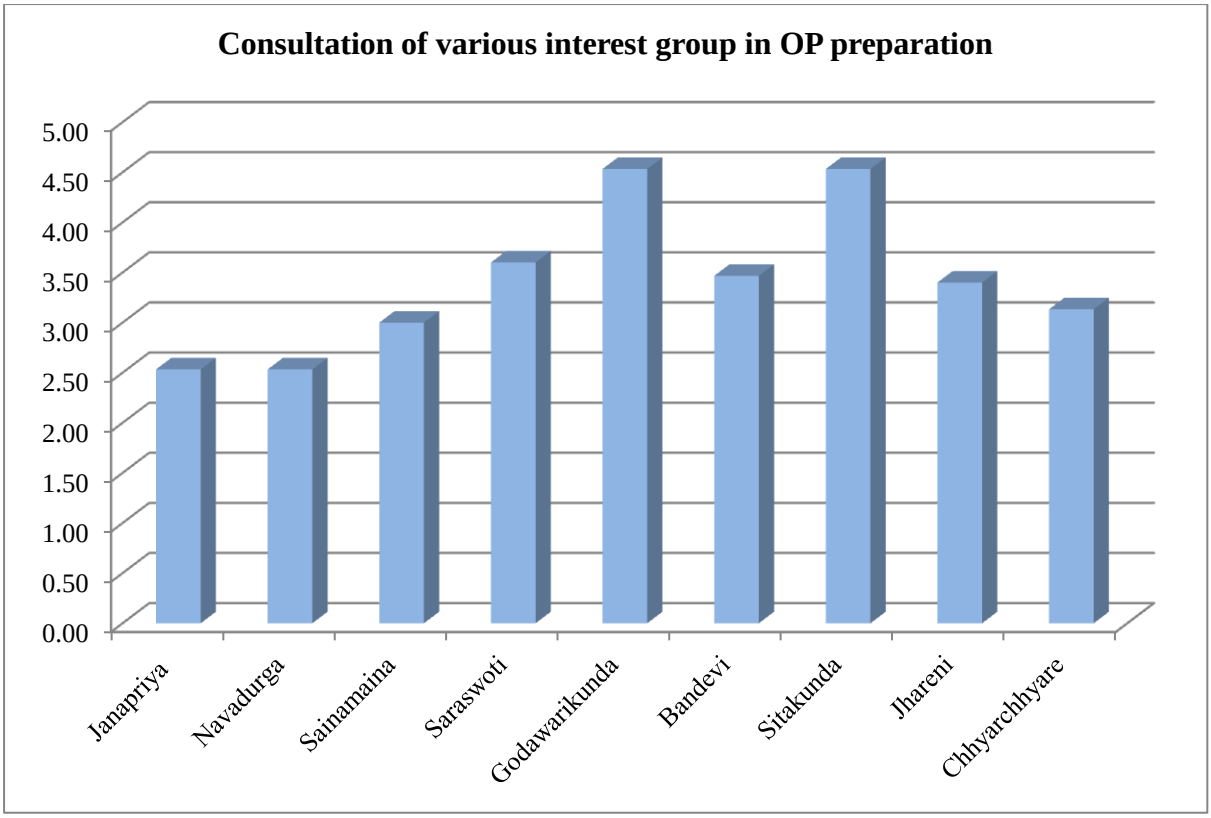
The CF Constitution and community forest Operational Plan (are the basic primary long-term strategic documents (~5 to 10 yrs period) that are used to guide CFUGs in terms of organisation functioning and community forest management. CFUGs prepare detailed annual activity implementation plans based on the OP to implement day-to-day activities. Therefore, consultation with various interest groups during the preparation of the OP is important to

secure the CF users' ownership of the various decisions made. The consultation process is believed to be very important for successful CF operation.

The respondents' views from the nine CFUGs on the consultation that occurred with the various interest groups during operational plan preparation are shown in Figure 5-9. CFUG users claim that many consultative meetings and discussions were conducted during OP preparation in Godawarikunda, Saraswoti and Sitakunda CFUGs. They further express their high level of satisfaction overall with consultation processes and take ownership of the constitution and operational plan of the CFUG and other associated decisions:

> We have a very good process so that everyone can get involved to prepare OP and CF constitution. The EC organises meetings in different *tole* (village) and collects their opinion so that every member including poor, women and members from ethnic group can put their view forward ... finally EC compiles everyone's idea and presents a draft in larger group meetings for final suggestion and necessary correction. Finally, OP is passed by general mass meeting and forwarded to District Forest Office for approval (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

From such expressions of CF members, it can be concluded that the CFUG follows the most democratic process since its inception. This participatory process enhances the users' ownership of their community forests and improves the internal governance of CFUG.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-9. Consultation of various interest groups in CF operation plan preparation. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of consultation of different interest groups (5, the respondents strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

However, the situation in Godawarikunda CFUG is not replicated in many other CFUGs. In many cases the OP is prepared by key members of the executive committee with support from the forest rangers either from district forest office or from the project. A lack of consultation with various interest groups often leads to conflict among users as many users do not know what is included in the OP and for what reason. It is often claimed that the chairperson and secretary produce the OP with the help of DFO staff who do not then inform all members. Severe dissatisfaction expressed by general members of Navadurga and Janapriya CFUGs illustrates the undemocratic processes followed during formulation of such important CF documents:

> ... In fact, we do not know what is written in the *Karyayojana* (operational plan). They do not involve us in the consultation process. We are never asked what to include and what not... as far as I know it was the job of *samiti* (executive committee) and chairperson (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

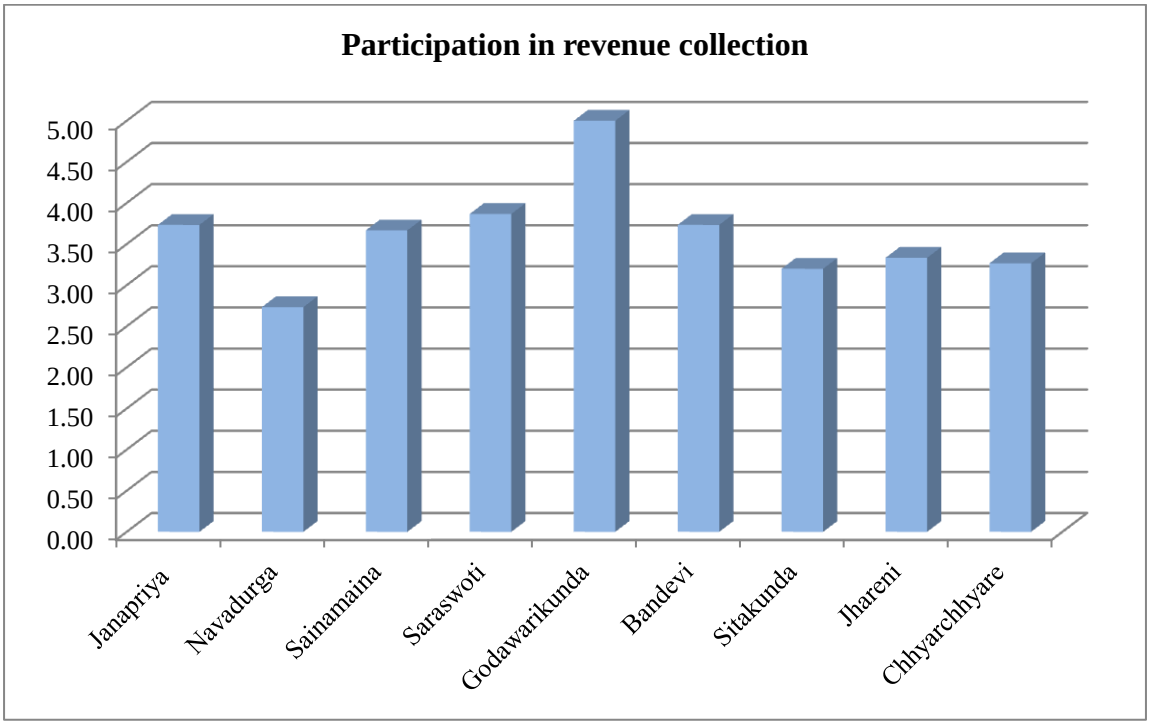
Based on the empirical results, the study concludes that adequate consultation among different interest group enhances both CF participation and ownership of decisions. Conversely, a lack of consultation hinders overall participation and indicates poor CF governance.

5.3.6 PARTICIPATION IN REVENUE COLLECTION

To run CFs and undertake other community development activities requires funds. How women, *dalit*, indigenous nationalities and other interest groups participate to secure sources of income, and how much funds they can secure from membership fees, selling of forest products, fines and collecting revenues is an important component of CF success. Several studies have shown that such functional financial participation enhances CF users' involvement in decision making in community forestry and ultimately improves CF governance (Pokharel et al., 2012; MFSC, 2013).

In the CFUGs studied a variety of ways to collect revenues were used including sale of forest products, fines, entrance fees and annual membership fees. For example, Godawarikunda CFUG is successful in collecting revenues from those sources from each household as per its AGM decision. The CF users report being pleased with the annual fee charged by the AGM. As one interviewee noted:

As per the decision of AGM all member of CFUG have to pay NRS.100 per year (A$1.20) membership fee. This money goes to the CFUG fund and is utilised transparently for CF protection and management activities. We decided the annual fee unanimously and pay happily on time (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-10. Status of financial participation in various CFUGs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of financial participation (5, respondents strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

However, in many cases ensuring participation in decision making and revenue collection is a difficult undertaking as members of the CFUG are contributing their time to protect and manage the forests. These members believe there should not be any further payment for the goods and services they receive from their CF. In many cases, the process of decision making and revenue collection occurs with the participation of a few elite members, a situation that reduces the ownership of general CFUG members. A respondent from Navadurga CFUG

perceived that the system of revenue collection was unfair and designed to benefit key CF members:

> In my observation, collection of revenue is for the benefit of *thulathalu* (key people of CF) ... actually we don't know where the fund goes how and why ... why should we pay more as we are spending our valuable time to protect the forest? (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District)

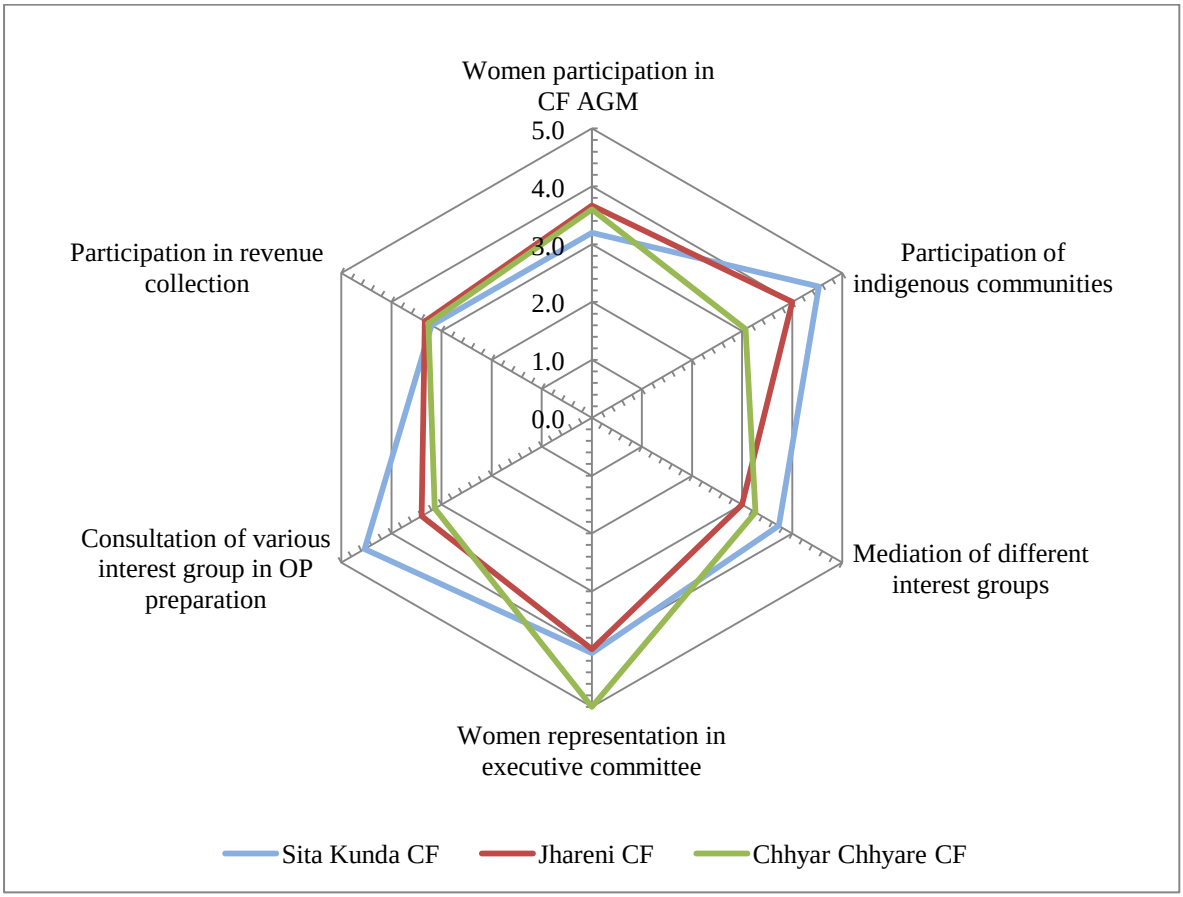
In the studied CFUGs, there was unanimous agreement that participation of CF users in decision making including the revenue collection mechanisms increased their ownership and resulted in a higher percentage of people implementing such decisions.

5.3.7 STATUS OF PARTICIPATION IN HIGH MOUNTAINS – THE CASE OF DOLAKHA DISTRICT

The views of respondents on the various indicators of participation in Dolakha District are summarised by a radar diagram (Figure 5-11). Sitakunda CFUG, located close to road head, is the most well functioning CFUG compared to Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare CFUG. However, women's participation in AGM seems to be lower in Sitakunda CFUG compared to the two other CFs. The main reasons for lower women participation are: lack of time available to attend meetings due to household responsibilities, lack of self-confidence, and lack of awareness despite the fact the CF is not far from the district headquarters. In addition, women in the Sitakunda CFUG are no longer using firewood to cook which was key motivating factor to participate in the CF in the past. Chhyarchhyare CFUG has the highest level of female representation in the executive committee, which explicitly encourages the participation of general women members in CFUG activities.

The study reveals that the representation of women in the executive committee alone does not necessarily result in the efficient management of a CF. In spite of strong women

representation in Chhyarchhyare CFUG, the other indicators of participation show poorer performance. In contrast, Sitakunda performs better on other indicators of participation despite having relatively lower female participation.



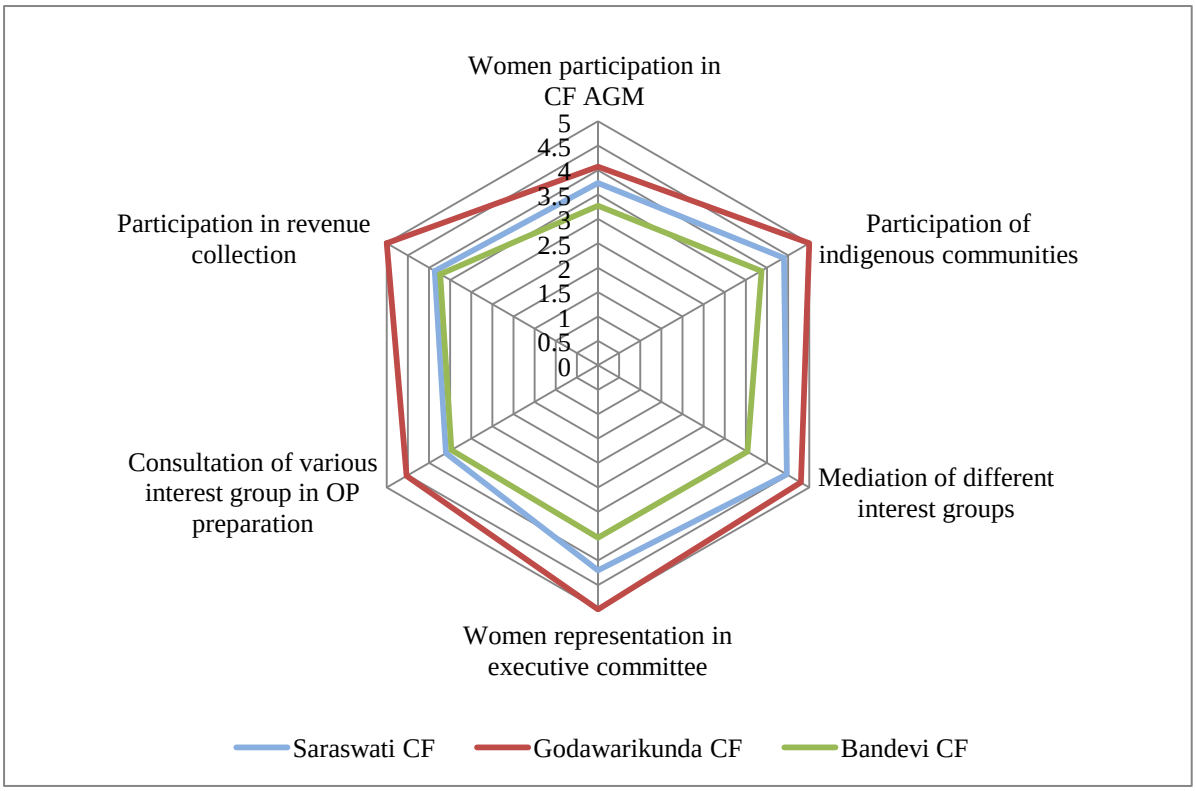
(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-11. Participation status in study CFUG in Dolakha District

5.3.8 STATUS OF PARTICIPATION IN MID-HILLS – THE CASE OF LALITPUR DISTRICT

Perceptions regarding participation varied in the three CFUGs in Lalitpur (Figure 5-12): Godawarikunda possessed the highest level participation, Saraswoti moderate, and Bandevi CFUG poorer performance. The superior performance of the Godawarikunda CFUG is

because of it is one of the oldest CFUGs in the district, located close to the city and Ilaka Forest Office, and has received a lot of support from the district forest office. The education level of the CFUG members is also high as many of them have access to computers and the internet in comparison to the other two CFUGs. On the other hand the majority of members in the Bandevi CFUG are from disadvantaged groups and poor socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, they have a poorer level of awareness and lower participation in CF conservation and management.



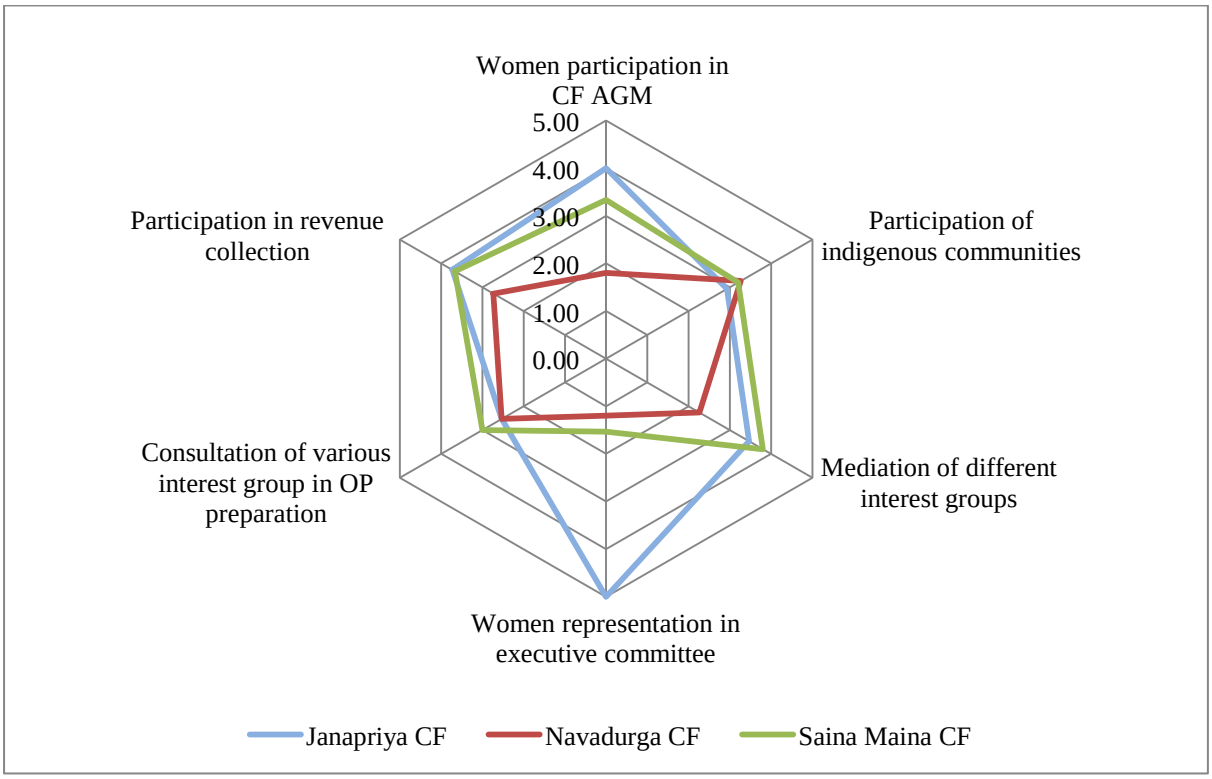
(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-12. Participation status in study CF in Lalitpur District

Many scholars argue that status of participation is better in Mid-Hills compared to the Terai region (Pokharel et al., 2008; Pokharel and Tiwari, 2013). However, this study shows that participation varies considerably even in the Mid Hills Region (Figure 5-12).

5.3.9 STATUS OF PARTICIPATION IN TERAI – THE CASE OF RUPANDEHI DISTRICT

The various indicators of participation in Rupandehi District reveal a mixed situation. Sainamaina and Janapriya CFUGs are relatively better performing CFUGs, while Navadurga CFUG appears to function poorly (Figure 5-13). A comparison of Sainamaina and Janapriya CFUGs reveals that some indicators are better in Janapriya (i.e., women participation in CF AGM and in CF executive committee), while other indicators are better in Sainamaina CFUG. In contrast to the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions, there is a poor consultation among the various interest groups during the preparation of the CF constitution and OP in the Terai Region, which also results in relatively poor performance.



Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-13. Participation status in study CF in Rupandehi District

The poor performance of Navadurga CFUG is mainly due to the diverse ethnic groups from *Madhesi* communities who have low level of awareness of CF management. The CF executive committee is controlled by those with an interest in the financial benefits of the forest. In addition, the *Madhesi* communities do not generally believe that women belong in public or should meet/talk to other male which hinders women's participation and representation. Janapriya CFUG is close to the road head and evidences a relatively better level of public awareness. Further, the Janapriya CF is mainly run by women members who believe that they are the real users of forest products. There is also very close coordination between men and women members in this CF.

5.4 TRANSPARENCY

Transparency in various community forestry activities is an important component of good forest governance. It is often argued that transparency is a benchmark to assess the quality of CF governance (Davis et al., 2013). For example, CF promotes transparency by guaranteeing public access to information. Further, those CFUGs that are transparent in their decision making processes and benefit-sharing mechanisms are more successful and better governed. Despite the internationally commended successes of Nepal's CF programme, many recent studies indicate concern about the availability of information regarding benefit sharing, annual auditing and reporting (e.g., Paudel et al., 2011; Pokharel et al., 2012). In the CFUGs studied here, members responses associated with various indicators of transparency were collated in an ordinal ranking, interview comments compiled and CF documents and decisions of CFUGs reviewed to assess the situation of transparency.

5.4.1 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

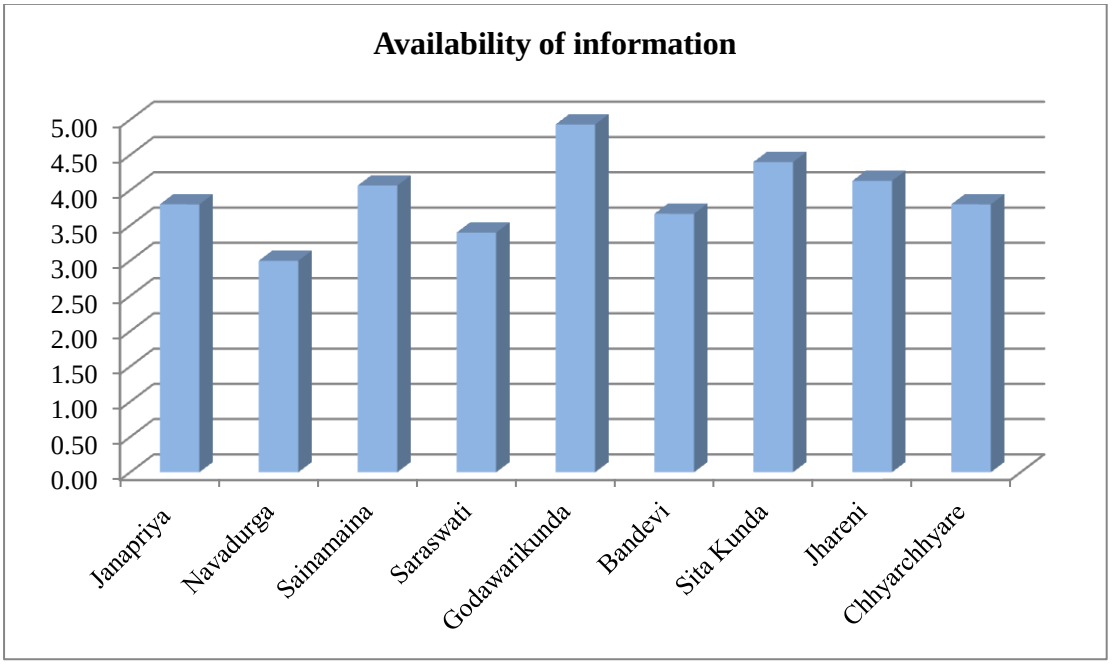
The availability of information related to CFUGs and their activities is critical to help members to understand what is happening in their forests and secure their participation in community forestry activities. It is hypothesised that the success of CFs depends on readily accessible information to users and stakeholders.

The amount of information available and how it flows within CFUGs is a primary concern of CF users. Some CFUGs provide all available information to users when requested, while others do not do so for one or another reason. This could be, for example, because the elite members of a CFUG are making decisions in their own favour which they do not want to disclose to general users.

This study reveals that there are some CFUGs where all information is freely available to all CFUG members (e.g., Godawarikunda and Janapriya CFUG), while in other cases information is not transparent and only key members have access to critical information (e.g., Bandevi, Navadurga and Saraswoti CFUG). Respondents from Godawarikunda and Janapriya CFUGs expressed their higher level of satisfaction regarding the availability of information:

> Availability of information is not an issue in our CFUG... we are like an open book and nothing is hidden here... each and every member of the CFUG gets the information easily as per the request at any time.... (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

...we use a messenger (a staff employed by CFUG) to convey the information related to the members so each and every household knows the key decisions made by the committee ... any member wanting further details is welcome to visit CFUG office... so in my opinion the information is not hidden from anybody else... (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-14. Status of availability of information in various CFs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of information availability (5, respondents strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

In contrast, respondents of Navadurga and Bandevi CFUGs expressed their concern regarding the availability of information and claimed they were not aware about recent happenings in their CF.

...key people of CFUG executive committee keep the information and do not provide it to other members. In my view the main reason to hide the information is not letting other members know about their corruption in financial resources... (Interviewee,Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

> ...only elite keep the information and others are not interested to get any information which they think is neither useful nor necessary to have such information... (Interviewee, Bandevi CFUG, Lalitpur District).

The research and indicative views of respondents specify that the availability and flow of information is critical to the success of CF management. Those CFUGs with better information flow mechanisms performed better and had improved status of governance while poor information flow was associated with a weakening in the overall transparency of many CFUGs.

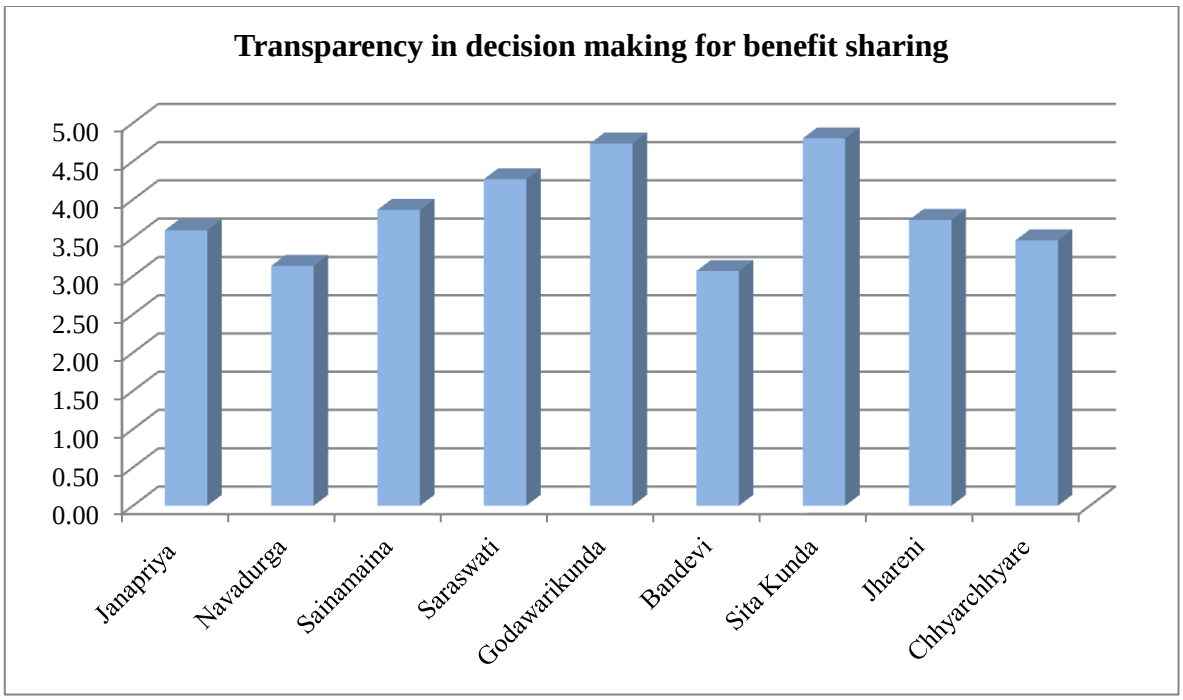
5.4.2 DECISION MAKING IN BENEFIT SHARING

Local communities put a great deal of time and effort into the protection and management of community forests. As a result of those efforts, a CF produces a considerable amount of goods and services. A key reason that individuals and communities participate in CF activities is to share in the benefits. Therefore most CF members are interested in participating in decision making processes over benefit sharing. Although many of the CFUGs studied have adopted clear and transparent benefit sharing mechanisms, some have not done so. It is hypothesised that a lack of transparency in benefit sharing mechanisms can lead to conflict among users and a failure to adequately protect and manage their forest resources.

From the study, two CFUGs, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda, display a higher level of transparency in benefit sharing decisions than others. Respondents of these two CFUGs noted:

We are satisfied with the situation of decision-making process of CFUG regarding benefit sharing mechanism, which is very clear and transparent among CF users. Various provisions of benefit sharing are first discussed within the EC and then forwarded for the public notice. Finally these provisions are approved from AGM, where every member can verify and amend their concerns (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

Our CFUG decided unanimously to implement various pro-poor friendly activities such as income generation activation within the CF, providing free timber for poor people and low interest loans for those in need. We feel that the process is clear and transparent (Interviewee, Sitakunda CFUG, Dolakha District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-15. Status of benefit sharing from CF. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the transparency of decision making process regarding benefit sharing (5, respondents strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

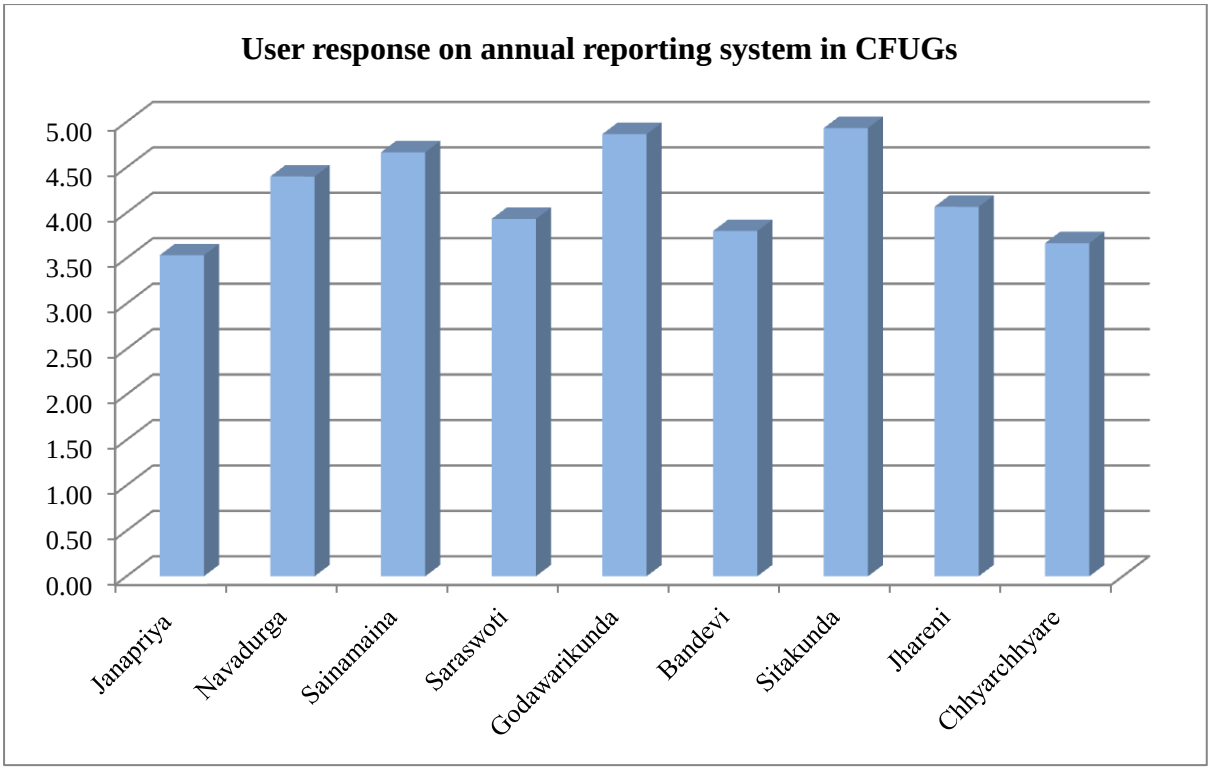
In contrast respondents from Navadurga and Bandevi CFUGs expressed concern regarding weak and opaque mechanisms of benefit sharing in their community forests. In these two CFUGs, the EC appears to work in isolation during decision making for benefit sharing, which lowers the level of transparency.

> Many CFUG members are interested to participate in decision making for distribution of immediate financial benefits... whatever they collect they spend as soon as it is received ... they have also a conflict with the District Forest Office therefore the approval process is taking longer than usual... (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).
>
> ... We do not have clear and transparent meetings during the finalisation of provisions for benefit sharing mechanism in our CF... only the elite members are involved in the decisions and keep the useful information with them. They do not share such decisions and relevant information with the general members... (Interviewee, Bandevi CFUG, Lalitpur District).

The study concludes that successful CFUGs have ensured transparency among their members and stakeholders in decision making and benefit sharing as many other scholars argue (Chhatre et al., 2012; Ojha et al., 2013). Long time practice of maintaining transparency in benefit sharing has led to successful CFUG and robust or well governed CF institution.

5.4.3 ANNUAL REPORTING

Annual reports are important indicators of transparency in community forestry. A variety of reporting mechanisms are used in different community forests (Figure 5-16). The empirical result shows that CFUGs that have a longer history of CF management and higher education status of EC members prepare and distribute reports among stakeholders (e.g., Godawarikunda and Sitakunda). In contrast, some relatively newly formed CFUGs with fewer years of experience, a lack of education and limited resources have weaknesses in reporting, which ultimately leads to users who are unaware of activities and associated outcomes.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-16. Status of annual reporting mechanism in various CFs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the transparency status of annual reporting to relevant authorities (5, reports submitted to general assembly and the DFO and 1, no annual reporting) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

In addition, the study shows that reporting and dissemination of CF activities is being either blocked or postponed because of ill motivation of EC members. A respondent expressed the reality:

> I have not heard yet that EC prepares any report and gives us although I cannot read and write. I do not think that we need such reports. We are poor so, we need firewood and fodder from CFs, but EC do not allow us to collect. When we raised such issues the chairperson was angry with us and blamed us and said that we do not know the rules and regulations of CFUG (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupandehi District).

In contrast, a lack of capacity of EC members causes problems in effective report writing and dissemination. One interviewee said:

> The previous men dominant in the EC had worked for personal benefits. We were against their work. Therefore, leadership opportunity was provided to us. We also accepted the challenge given by men. We are mostly women in the EC and do not

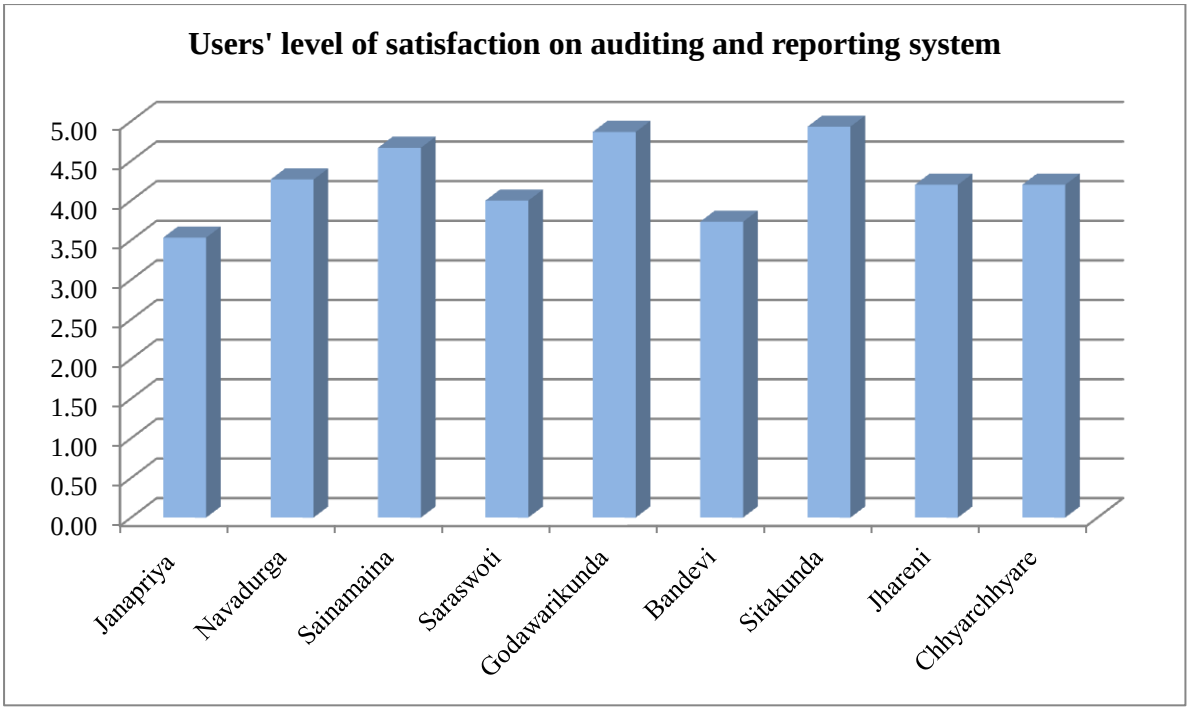
> have previous experience. I have heard that we have to prepare annual report of our activities. As a chairperson I should say I do not have skill in report writing. Even we are facing problems in minute taking and writing official letters. We have requested to DFO and FECOFUN to provide us training (Interviewee, Chhyarchhyare CFUG, Dolakha District in FGD).

The research shows that reporting is a key means of communication with users as well as other stakeholders. In many cases, a lack of capability in writing reports causes problems in many CFUGs. Capacity building of EC in report writing and dissemination will enhance the governance of CFUGs that are relatively new and inexperienced.

5.4.4 AUDITING AND REPORTING

Annual auditing and reporting is a key requirement for all CFUGs under Nepal's new community forestry guidelines. Regular auditing and reporting can help users and District Forest Office staff understands the financial status of CFs and also serve to enhance transparency. Audits can also identify weakness in a CFUG's financial structure that then becomes a focus of future improvement. Furthermore an audit can uncover any inaccuracies and discrepancies in record keeping and further contribute to overall transparency.

In this study, the views of respondents of CFUGs regarding the status of auditing and reporting systems in various CFUGs are depicted in Figure 5-17. A mix of responses on auditing reporting system can be observed.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-17. Status of auditing and reporting system in various CFUG. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the transparency status of auditing and reporting to relevant authorities (5, audit reports submitted to general assembly and the DFO and 1, no auditing and reporting) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

Sainamaina CFUG (Rupandehi District), Godawarikunda CFUG (Lalitpur District) and Sitakunda CFUG (Dolakha District) show better auditing and reporting systems; in contrast, Janapriya CFUG (Rupandehi) and Bandevi CFUG (Lalitpur) show poor auditing and reporting system. Remaining CFUGs are perceived to be at a moderate level of reporting systems.

Two contrasting opinions from two different CFUGs about auditing and reporting are presented below:

> Our CFUG recruits a certified auditor to audit our financial transactions annually and verify the account keeping and prepare a report by the treasurer. The audited report is discussed and passed by the executive committee and then presented to the AGM. A copy of audit report is sent to District Forest Office for their records. We believe in the report (Interviewee, Sitakunda CFUG, Dolakha District).

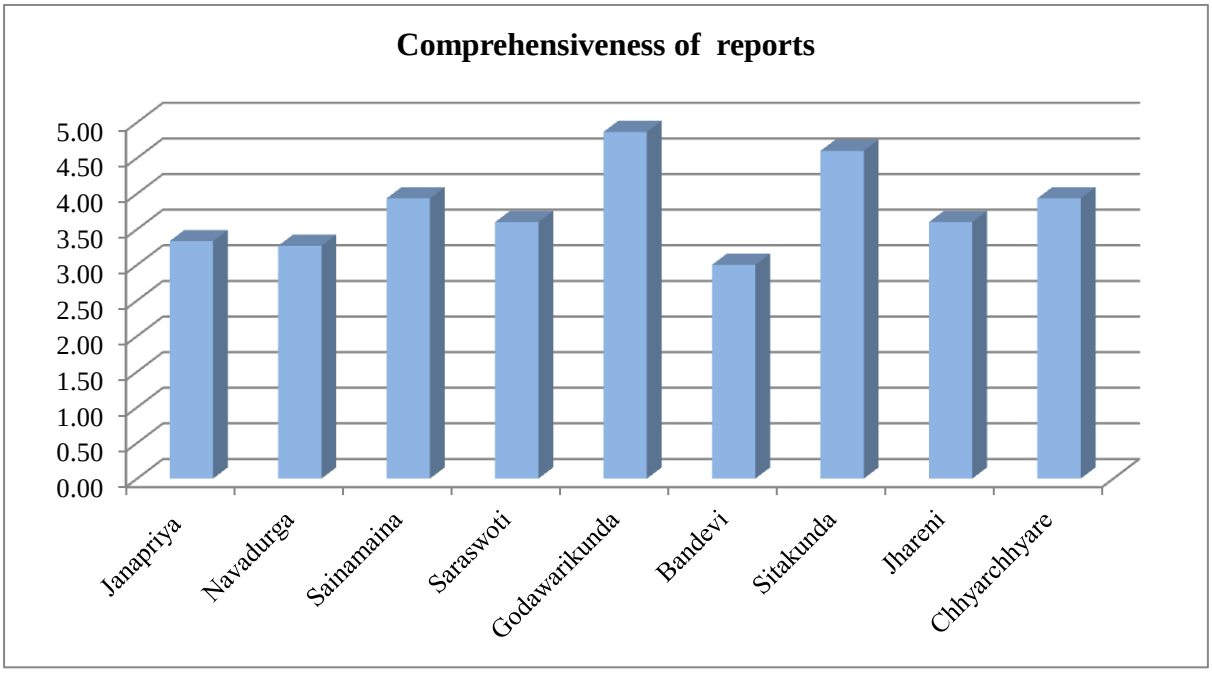
> ... frankly speaking I have not seen any audit reports from our CFUG so far since many years... in my opinion why would they produce a report that could tie them as they have misused the large sum of money from kosh (community fund)... they probably share some money with Rangers so that they do not have to do any auditing and reporting... (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

The contrasting voices of users in the above two cases describes the different status of financial transparency in CFUGs. It is obvious from the two cases that the intentions of the executive committee are a key factor in maintaining financial transparency. Many respondents express the need for standardized account keeping and auditing systems to further improve the financial transparency of all CFUGs.

5.4.5 COMPREHENSIVENESS OF REPORTS

Well-written reports regarding activities undertaken in the previous year are an important indicator of transparent CFUG functioning. According to Nepal's CF Guidelines, every CFUG must prepare a report in an approved standard format that should include the activities and key outcomes for the year. The executive committee is mainly responsible for preparing the annual report. However in many cases annual reports do not reflect all activities and present a few selected activities to meet formal legal requirement. CF users were asked about their perceptions of the comprehensiveness of the reports prepared by the executive committee, and the results are presented in Figure 5-18. Most of the respondents from Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs reportedly felt that the reports were comprehensive, elaborate and usefulness. They therefore understand those reports easily and express their satisfaction with the reports provided by executive committee:

> Our executive committee provides a report every year, which contains the information about each and every activity undertaken by the committee including annual income and expenditure of the CFUG. Audit report is also inserted in the report. Beside this, executive members provide us requested information as per our request. I am really happy with most of people working in the executive committee (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-18. Comprehensiveness of reports in various CF. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the comprehensiveness of annual reports (5, strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain shown in X-axis.

Members in other CFUGs such as Janapriya, Navadurga and Bandevi perceived that the reports produced and supplied to them are incomplete. Respondents of Navadurga CFUG revealed they did not know of reports produced by their CF executive committee or about the comprehensiveness of those reports:

> I have no idea if our CFUG produces any report...in fact they (executive committee members especially Chairperson and Secretary) do not provide any information to us so how do we know about the report and content in the report... what they would provide is what they think – the CF belongs to them and they are the managers ... I will certainly ask about the report in next AGM... (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

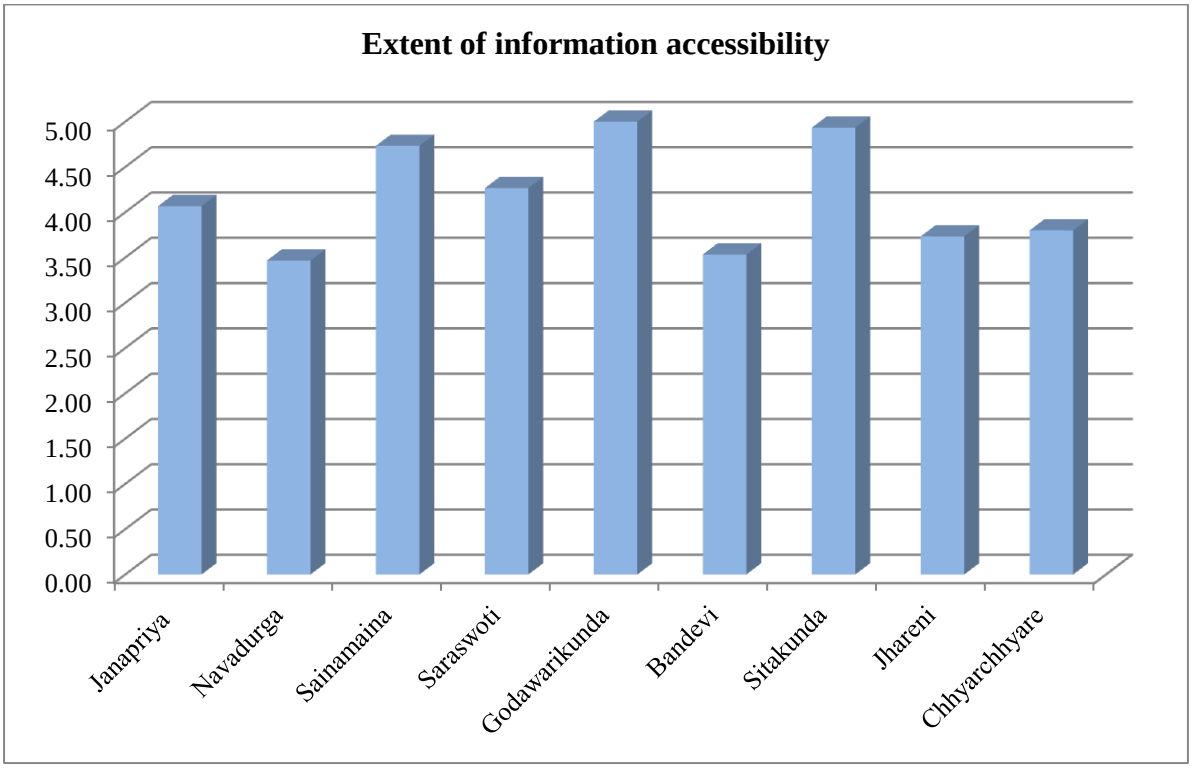
The study shows that active executive committees have been preparing comprehensive reports and distributing them to users as well as relevant stakeholders. It is also obvious that the quality and robustness of such reports is largely subject to the motives of office bearers and key position holders of the CFUG.

5.4.6 EXTENT OF INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY

The degree to which information is accessible is an important indicator of transparency. It is generally argued that the better the access to information is, the more transparent the CFUG and vice versa. Many CFUGs prepare only a few pages for a report, which is not even circulated to stakeholders. While they may actually have completed many activities, some CFUGs are reluctant to provide access to the information either to CFUG members or outsiders, including the District Forest Office.

In the study CFUGs, respondents' views on the extent of accessibility of information are shown in Figure 5-19. As with other indicators, Godawarikunda (Lalitpur District), Sitakunda (Dolakha District) and Sainamaina (Rupandehi District) CFUGs provide a high level of access to information through extensive reports and/or other means to CF members and other stakeholders. High level of satisfaction of users is noted over the easy and quick accessibility of information, which is appreciated and recognized by many respondents of those CFUGs:

> When I visited the CFUG office and requested information, the executive committee provided me a variety of information associated to CF activities such as, training opportunities, amount of forest products provided to each household and harvesting time and so on. They also gave other forests related information such as seedling for fodders to plant at farmland. They contacted nearby forest office and provided information in some cases. I found that most users were happy with information accessibility (Interviewee, Sitakunda CFUG, Dolakha District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-19. Status of accessibility of information in various CF. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the extent of information accessibility (5, information publicly available and 1, only kept by chairperson and secretary) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

In contrast, Bandevi (Lalitpur), Navadurga (Rupandehi), Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare (Dolakha) CFUGs provide limited information which is of limited use to the members and other stakeholders including the District Forest Office. Many respondents from Jhareni CFUG expressed their dissatisfaction over the status of access of the information and felt that restrictinginformation to users was because of hiding irregularities:

> It is difficult for me to access the extent of information available in the CFUG. I have not seen any report and information compiled provided to CFUG members and any other agencies. In my opinion they either do not prepare any reports or provide them to audiences or for fear they hide their irregularities done in CF. I would not want to comment further as we have reported this issue many times to the District Forest Office. However, DFO office did not listen much. I think they have also some stake in hiding such information... (Interviewee, Jhareni CFUG, Dolakha District).

The study supports the argument that access to the information is one of major concerns of CFUG members and also a vital indicator to measure transparency. Where good access to information is provided, the CFUG functions well. It fosters cohesion and coordination both among CF members and with external agencies. CFUGs with poor access to the CF information system have reduced credibility.

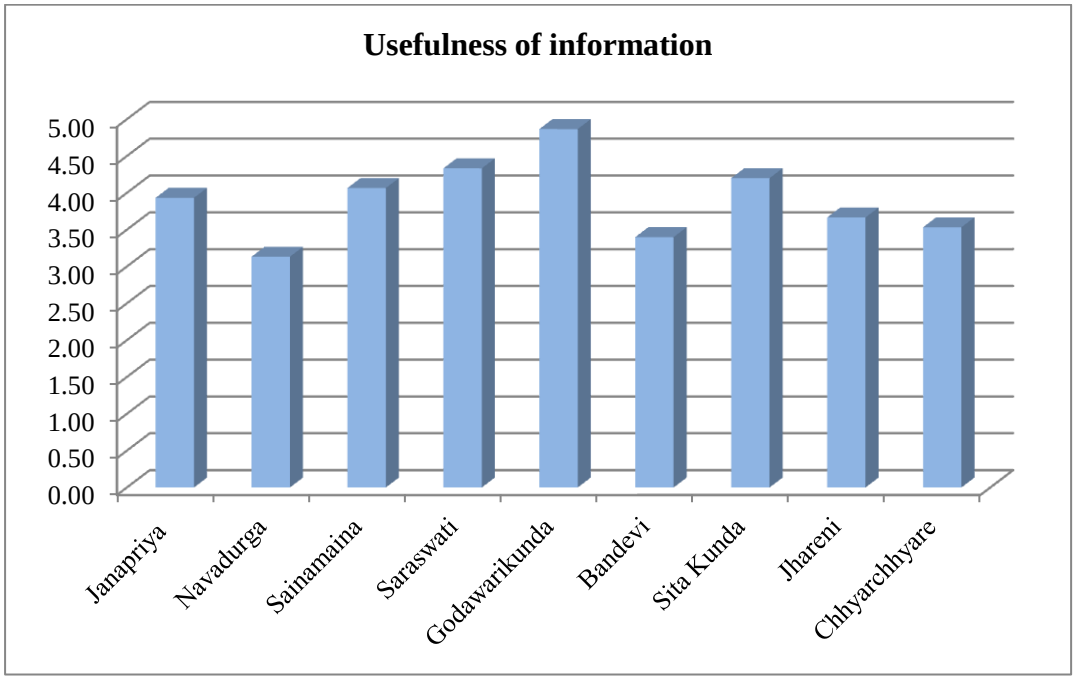
5.4.7 USEFULNESS OF INFORMATION

Community-based forest management and greater public involvement implies civil society groups, forest managers and researchers should be working more closely with the local community. A better understanding of what information CFUG members and relevant stakeholders trust and pay attention to is important as it can assist long-term management of community forests. Further, useful information is a powerful tool to make CF operations more transparent and robust. Therefore, the information available from CFUGs must be correct and useful to the CF users and relevant government authorities. However, while many CFUGs provide information, much of it is not especially useful, while other CFUGs provide very little information and certainly not enough to understand the CF's activities.

In the CFUGs studied, respondents rated the usefulness of the information provided by their CFUG, which is presented in Figure 5-20. As with other indicators, the study reveals that

Godawarikunda CFUG (Lalitpur District) provides relevant and trustworthy information to CF members and stakeholders, meeting user satisfaction at the desired level. Janapriya and Sainamaina (Rupandehi), Saraswoti (Lalitpur) and Sitakunda (Dolakha) CFUGs provide also provide good information to their members and other stakeholders. Individual opinion of respondents to the HH survey and collective views of users at FGD indicate that they believe the information provided by the CFUG and are fully satisfied in this regard in case of Godawarikunda CFUG:

> In my opinion, we are getting the information we are looking for such as activities of CFUG, future plan and fund and its use, so I fully agree that information available to the CFUG members is in useful format. In addition, the information is published in *tole to 'tole* (village to village) notice board. In an emergency, CF information flows to individual households through community forest guards (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CF, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-20. The usefulness of available information in various CF. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the usefulness of information (5, respondent strongly agrees and 1, strongly disagrees) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

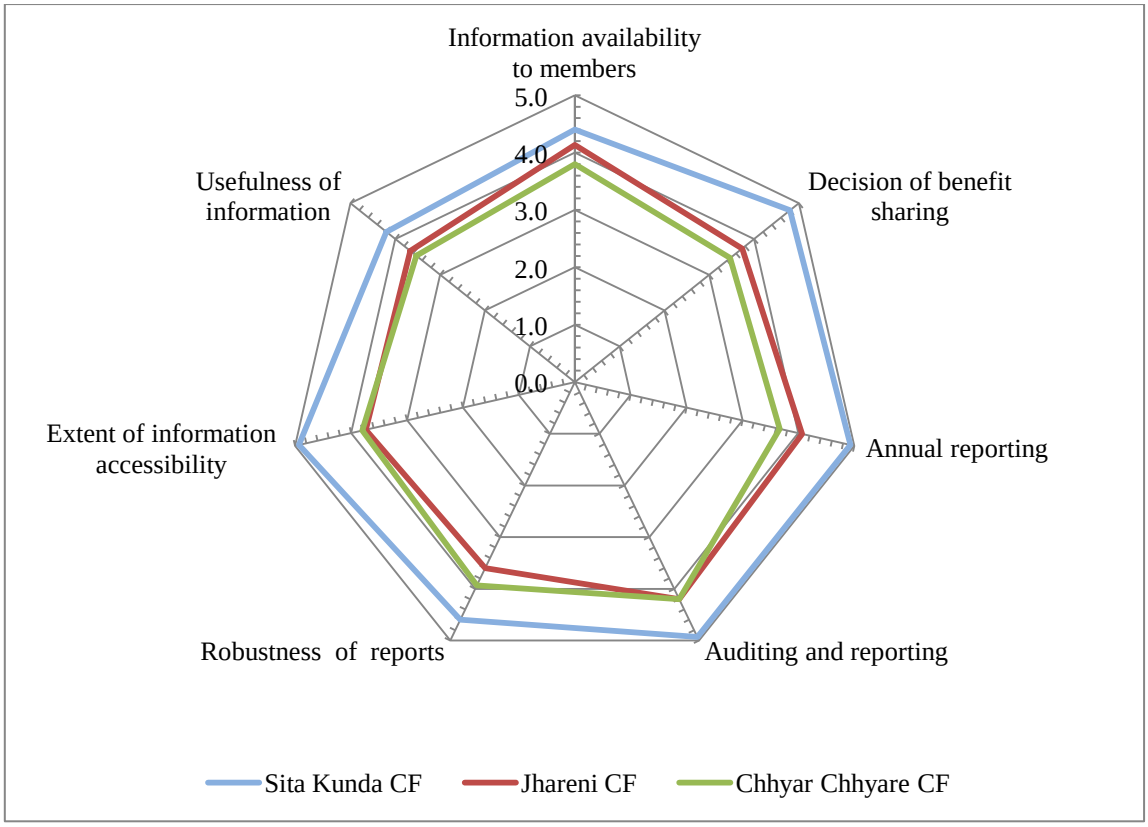
However, the information flow system in the CFUG and usefulness of information provided is comparatively lower in the case of Bandevi CFUG (Lalitpur) and Navadurga CFUG (Rupandehi). A respondent's view on the usefulness of information is presented below:

> I have not asked yet executive committee for CF information, but I have heard that either they do not provide information to members when they ask or give information that may not much useful to the users regarding CF activities and future plan. I think it is because of low education level among members of executive committee. DFO and other stakeholders should provide training to the executive members to strengthen the capacity in this field (Interviewee, Bandevi CFUG, Lalitpur District).

The empirical results of the study support the argument that providing useful information develops integrity among CF users and executive committee members as well as generating support from the District Forest Office and stakeholders.

5.4.8 STATUS OF TRANSPARENCY IN HIGH MOUNTAINS – THE CASE OF DOLAKHA DISTRICT

A comparative analysis of the seven transparency indicators has been carried out for the High Mountain region, Dolakha District, and is depicted in the radar diagram in Figure 5-21. Sitakunda CFUG performs very well across many indicators indicating its management system is transparent. Also while Sitakunda CFUG is showing moderately lower transparency in the preparation of useful information and its availability to users, it performs much better than other CFUGs like Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare. Participants in Chhyarchhyare CFUG, in particular, report low transparency across most indicators, while the results for Jhareni CFUG lie between the two.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

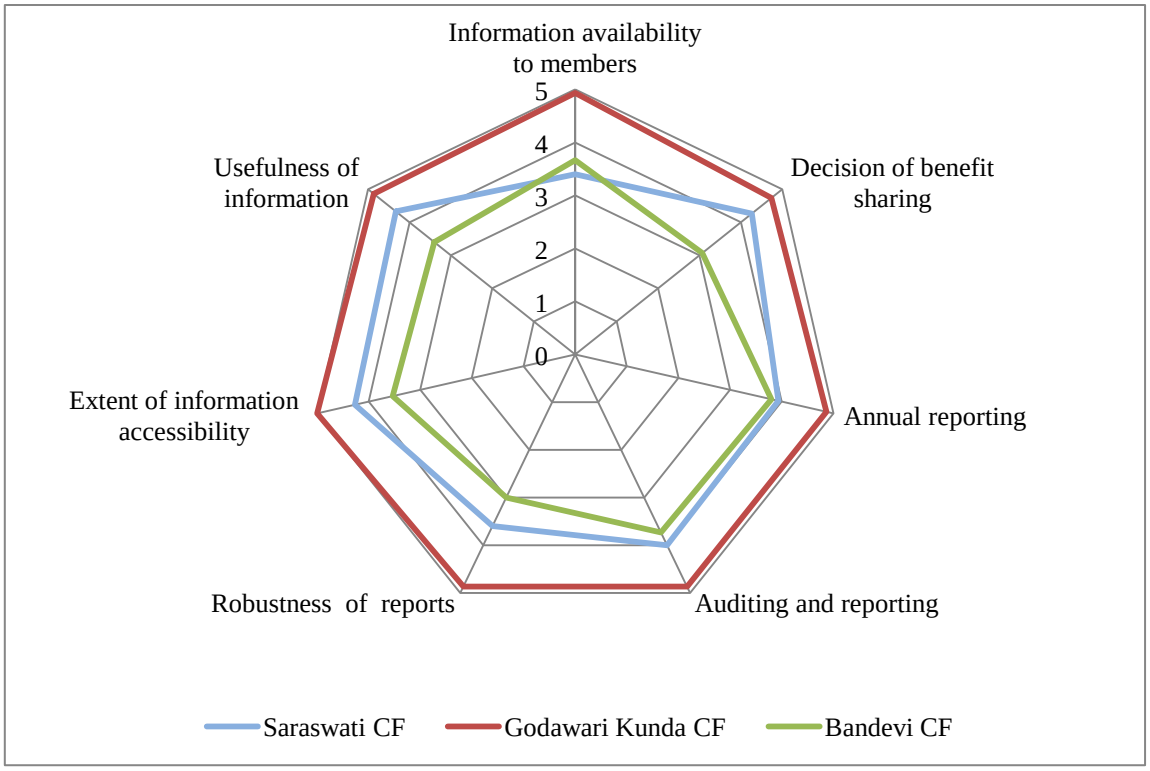
Figure 5-21. Transparency status in study CFs in High Mountain region – the case of Dolakha District

5.4.9 STATUS OF TRANSPARENCY IN MID-HILLS – THE CASE OF LALITPUR DISTRICT

A comparative analysis of transparency indicators in the Lalitpur District CFUGs is depicted in Figure 5-22. The results indicate that the Godawarikunda CFUG is perceived to be the most transparent of the three studied. It is noted that Godawarikunda CFUG is an exemplary CF, because of strong project support, long experience in CF management, and well developed management mechanisms.

In contrast, Bandevi CFUG performs poorly in transparency across most of the assessed indicators except availability of information. In this Region, the Saraswoti CFUG evidences a

moderate level of transparency across most indicators, but fails to provide satisfactory information to CF users.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

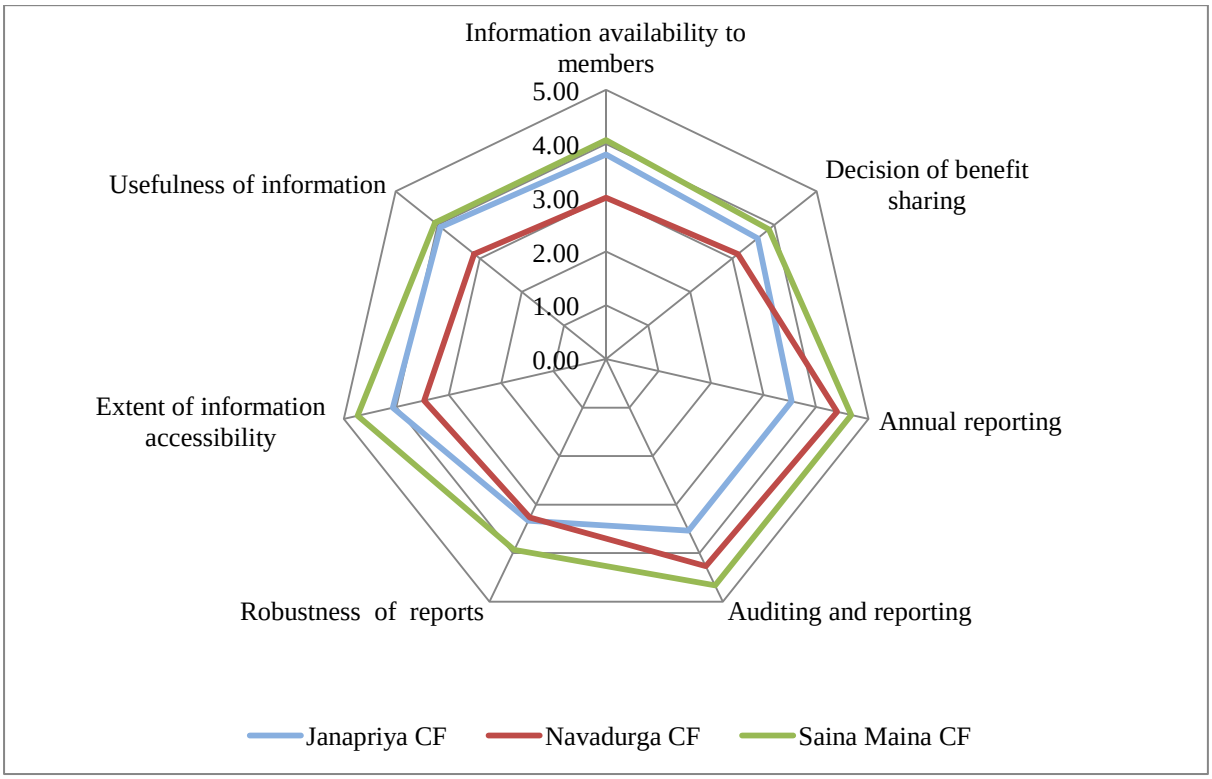
Figure 5-22. Transparency status in study CFs in Mid-Hills region - the case of Lalitpur District

5.4.10 STATUS OF TRANSPARENCY IN TERAI - THE CASE OF RUPANDEHI DISTRICT

The level of transparency among the three CFUGs of Rupandehi District is analysed and presented in Figure 5-23. Unlike the Mid-Hills and High-Mountain districts, the level of transparency is comparatively lower in Rupandehi District, Terai Region. Sainamaina CFUG has a relatively higher level of transparency across most indicators including benefit sharing, auditing and annul reporting and comprehensiveness of reports prepared and provided to wider audience. Users of Janapriya CFUG evaluate their CFUG as evidencing a medium

level of transparency. However, performance on information availability and the usefulness of such information is better compared to other indicators.

As in the case of participation, the level of transparency in Navadurga CFUG is lower across most of the indicators because of its complex demographic structure and the low socio-economic status of women. However, it remains at a moderate level with regard to annual reporting and auditing.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 5-23. Transparency status in study CFs in *Terai* region– the case of Rupandehi District

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The main focus of this chapter has been to present and discuss two of the six elements of good, decentralized, community-based forest governance, participation and transparency. To do this, a variety of indicators were identified, explained and used to assess participation and transparency. The chapter commenced by describing household characteristics such as gender and ethnic composition, well-being ranking and income status of respondents of the study CFUGs. The status of participation was assessed through six indicators that included women's participation in AGMs, participation of indigenous communities, mediation processes of different interest groups, women's representation on executive committees, and consultation with various interest groups during the development of the CF's constitution and preparation of its operation plan. Similarly, transparency was analysed through seven indicators: information availability to members, decision making process in benefit sharing, annual reporting, auditing and financial reporting, comprehensiveness of report, extent of information availability, and usefulness of information provided.

In the next chapter, I examine the status of another two elements of good, decentralized, community-based forest governance, accountability and effectiveness.

CHAPTER 6: ASSESSING DECENTRALISED COMMUNITY BASED FOREST GOVERNANCE – ACCOUNTABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results for two important elements of good forest governance: that is, accountability and effectiveness of community forestry in the three study districts. Both elements were assessed using a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators relevant to the study region. The primary household survey provided the necessary quantitative information while focus group discussions, key informants interviews, informal discussions, field observations and document review were carried out to collect the qualitative information.

6.2 ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability has emerged over the past decade as a key way to address both success and failure of community based forest governance. Accountability is the requirement to accept responsibility for one's actions. In principle, CFUG chairpersons, secretaries and office bearers are expected to be accountable to executive committees and CFUG members. Similarly, executive committee members are expected to be accountable to CFUG users. In practice, in many cases this has failed to occur for a variety of reasons. While in theory the control over a community forest rests with the CFUG (with the Annual General Meeting (AGM) making important decisions about how to run the CF effectively and efficiently, what the content of the constitution and operational plans will be, and determining the direction for

future management), in practice in many cases it is the executive committee that makes most of the decisions on behalf of users with approval obtained from the AGM at a later date.

6.2.1 CHAIRPERSON AND SECRETARY ACCOUNTABILITY

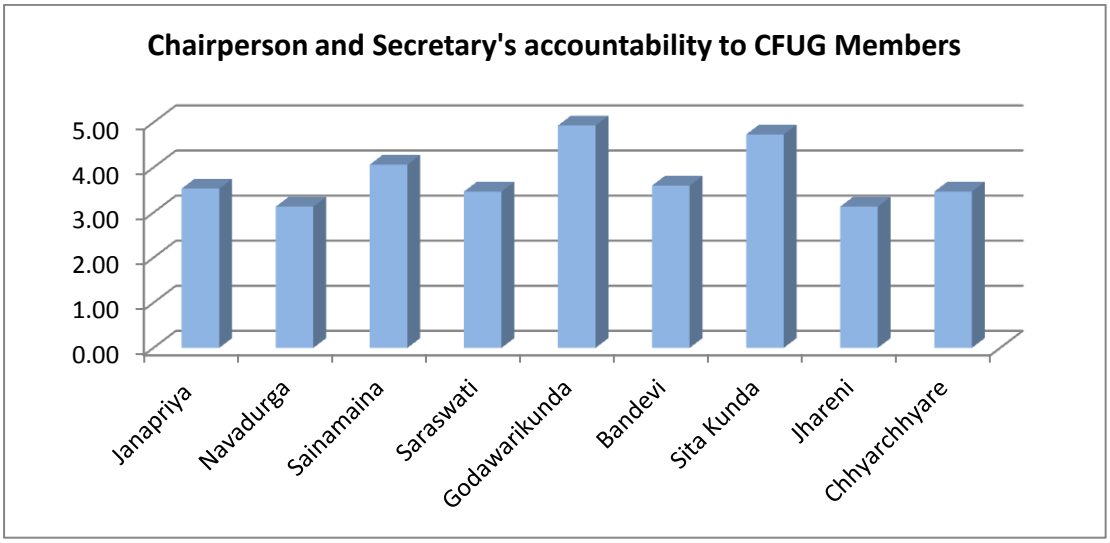
Decision-makers and implementers, whether they are officials or the whole committee, should be accountable for the way they use or abuse power. In community forestry, the chairperson and secretary of a CFUG have an influential role in making and implementing decisions as they are also responsible for maintaining regular contact with external agencies such as the DFO and civil society organisations. Therefore how they are held accountable to a CFUG is crucial for ensuring successful CF management. However in practice in some cases chairpersons and secretaries are neither responsible nor accountable to CFUG members. They are ready to accept accountability for positive outcomes but decline to be accountable for any failures.

Survey results from the nine CFUGs in the three study districts are depicted in Figure 6-1. The results show that the chairperson and secretaries of Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFs are highly accountable to CUFG members. During interviews, individual respondents of both CFUGs expressed repeatedly their satisfaction over the performance of both chairperson and secretary:

> The chairperson and secretary come to office on alternative days. When I go to office, I always meet either chairperson or secretary. They give enough time to listen to our problems and try to resolve as much as possible. If they are not able to resolve it, they call a meeting of executive committee. Sometimes, they bring us to VDC office and DFO office for solution. I have to appreciate their persistent work... (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast, the least accountable CFs appeared to be Jhareni and Navadurga CFUGs. Similarly, the results depict that the remaining five CFUGs are moderately accountable. Unaccountable people have difficulty mobilising CFUG members in CF activities and a consequent lacking of team effort reduces the efficiency and the effectiveness of a CF's programme, which result the poor performance of CFUG. Many CFUG members are worried about why their CFUGs are regarded as poor performing, when they have enough resources in CFs:

> I have not seen our CFUG office open in this year. I heard from my neighbour that the chairperson operates an office from his home. I feel that nepotism is a big problem in CFUG. Chairperson and secretary support only those nearest to them. They neither hear us nor act seriously on our problem. To ignore us, they postpone our concerns from one meeting to another even on simple issues. The agenda never comes for a discussion in succeeding meetings. After following it for a while, we also drop the agenda. I do not have much positive feeling to their work (Interviewee, Jhareni CFUG, Dolakha District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-1 Respondents views on chairperson and secretary accountability to CFUG. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of accountability (5, chairperson and secretary are accountable to the CFUG and 1, not accountable at all)[3] and name of study CF located in Terai (left) Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

[3] See Annex I part D for futher details

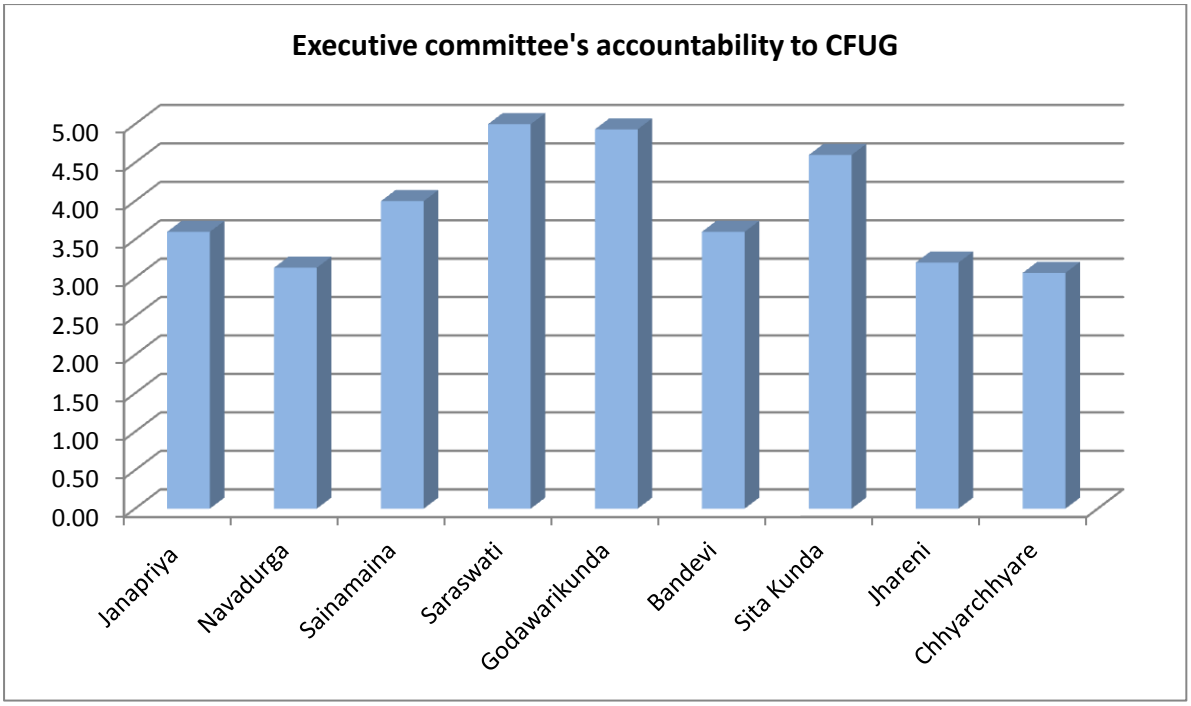
The research indicates that the role of chairperson and secretary is influential in decision making. Internalisation of downward and upward accountability among executive committee members affects the success of community forest processes. The research finds evidence that well established CFUGs with long term operational experience in CF management exhibit a higher level of accountability in comparison with newly formed CFUGs. The accountability of chairpersons and secretaries appears to increase with years of experience in CF management.

6.2.2 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACCOUNTABILITY TO CFUG MEMBERS

An executive committee is a managerial body elected at a general assembly of CF users. It is responsible for carrying out the CFUG's day to day activities, including the implementation of forest management plans and the mobilisation of the users to work on the CF programme. Therefore the accountability of an executive committee to a CFUG is an important factor for successful CF operation.

Research results shows that the executive committee of Saraswoti, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda are highly accountable to CFUG members (Figure 6-2). Users of these CFUGs expressed their contentment that executive committee members listen carefully to their problems and give priority to resolve those problems as soon as possible:

> I do not have any complaint against CF executives. Most of them are working sincerely in committee even at the expense of their personal work. Each of them works in CF office in their turn according to the approved rules for office operation. They also give additional time to guard the CF. I feel that our executives are working fairly in compare to adjoining CFUG (Interviewee, Saraswoti CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-2 Respondents views on executive committee accountability to CFUGs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of accountability (5, executive committee accountable to the CFUG and 1, not accountable at all)[4] and name of study CF located in Terai (left) Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

In contrast, the least accountable committees were reported to come from Navadurga, Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs, with executive committee moderately accountable in the remaining three CFUGs. Most respondents of these CFUGs expressed disgruntlement with the attitude and function of their executive committees.

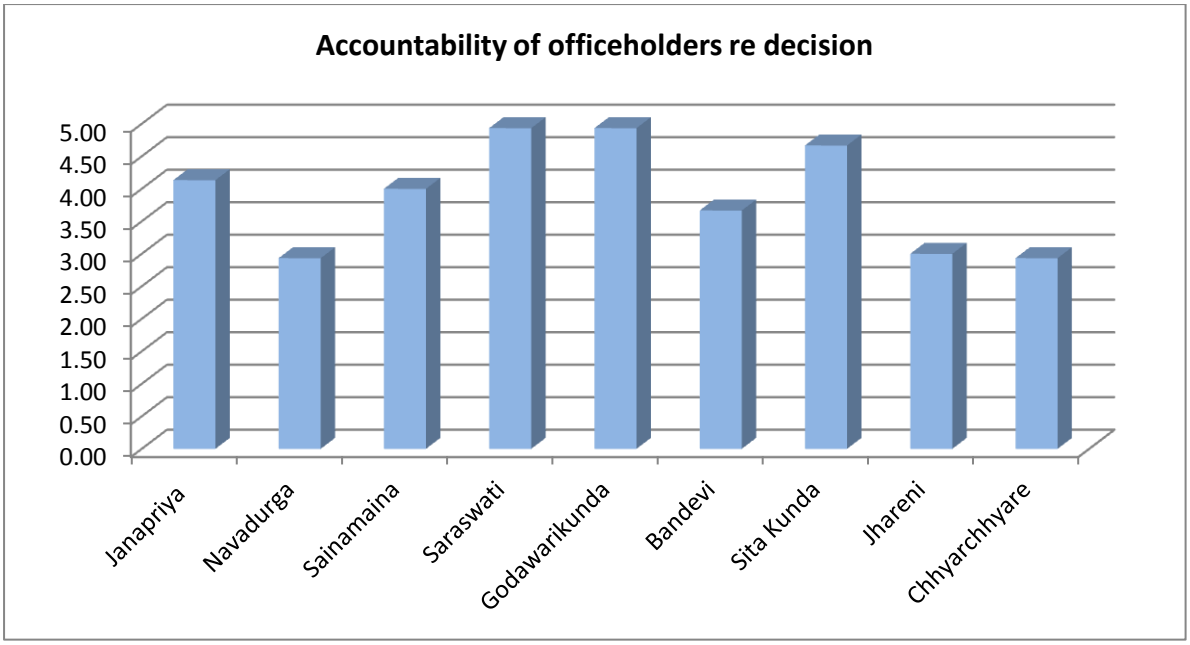
> I feel that the executive members of CF show a kind of hegemony over general members. I do not like such behaviour and do not even talk in case of serious problem. I have not seen such a moment of initiating discussion regarding problems of CF management and its users. I am from poor family. We use cow dung as source of cooking fuel. We have been facing a big problem of firewood for daily cooking. Our CF has the potential for firewood collection. But committee members do not give much importance to the collection and distribution of firewood. We are working with the CF with expectation of positive change in future… (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupandehi District).

[4] See Annex I part D for futher details

It is commonly assumed that a CFUG's executive committee is itself accountable to CFUG users who implement the rules and regulations stated in approved constitutional and operational plans. The results of this study indicate that where a CFUG chairperson and secretary are active and accountable, the whole executive committee is also accountable. In contrast, a CF executive committee that is less accountable is associated with a chairperson and secretary that are less accountable.

6.2.3 ACCOUNTABILITY OF OFFICE BEARERS FOR DECISIONS

Each CFUG appoints staff to manage daily official activities and forest protection duties. Such staff must be accountable to the executive committee and general membership at large regarding various CFUG decisions. The research results show that the accountability of office bearers varies among the studied CFs. Office bearers in Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CF were perceived to be highly accountable to CUFG members. In contrast, they were perceived to be least accountable in Navadurga, Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs. In the remaining three CFUGs office bearers were perceived to be moderately accountable.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-3 Respondents views on officeholders' accountability regarding the decisions made by them. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of accountability (5, executive committee accountable to the CFUG and 1, not accountable at all)[5] and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

The office bearers and staff are supposed to work under the direction of the executive committee. However this is not the case in many CFUGs such as Navadurga CF, Jhareni CF and Chhyarchhyare CF. The de-motivating factor here for community forestry staff is the low salary paid. In order to subsist, staff members have to find additional work besides work done in community forestry. It is understood that the executive committee does not provide clear instructions and guidelines to staff in many CFUGs. As a result, performance of those staff is diminished and CF decisions are not implemented. Many staff also unsatisfied by the ad hoc situation that exists in CF offices:

[5] See Annex I part D for futher details

> I am a staff of the CF since last five year. The CFUG gives me Rs. 2500 (~A$30) per month for full time work. My salary is not enough and I need to find additional work for living. In fact, I do not have much work in the CF office and I do not know much about the decisions made by executive committees. CF members come and ask me many questions regarding CF activities, but I do not know what to answer so I ask them to contact to the Chairperson and secretary (Interviewee, Sitakunda CFUG, Dolakha District).

The empirical results show that the hiring of office bearers without having proper CF plan in place causes diminished accountability. However, supervising and directing office bearers also reduces the time executives have to improve overall CF governance.

6.2.4 INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL AGENCIES

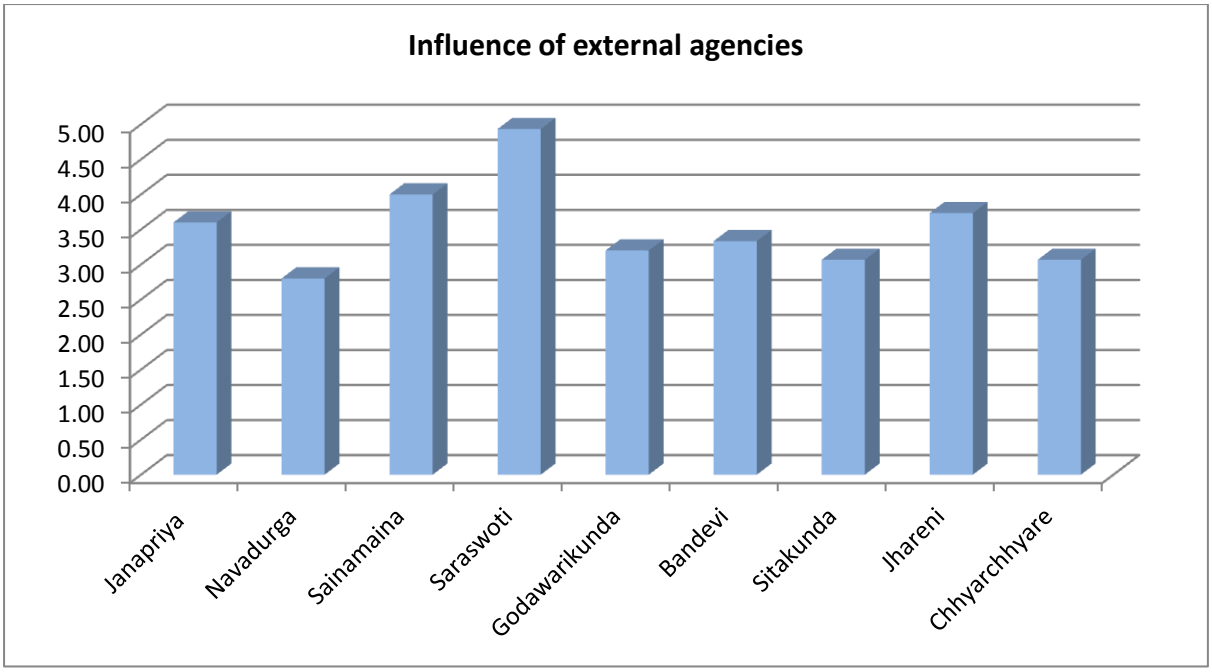
Many external organisations and agencies or 'outsiders' such as the Federation of Community Forest Users Group of Nepal (FECOFUN), local NGOs and local government authorities may directly or indirectly influence a CF's activities. Sometimes, the influence can produce positive outcomes such as supporting a CFUG in preparation of their management plan, conflict resolution and so forth. In other cases, however, outsider influence takes the form of a struggle for power between local government and those CFUGs that have significant resources. In such cases a local government may seek to control the resources that a CFUG would prefer to manage autonomously.

Respondents' views on the influence of external agencies in CF activities are represented in Figure 6-4. Saraswoti CFUG is perceived to run with little or no influence from external agencies. However, executive and general members are not satisfied with the support they receive from the DFO office which undertakes limited visits and gives them low priority:

> Our CF is small, only 9.0 ha but dependent households are 78. The condition of the forest is also poor and degraded with *salla ban* (Pine forests). We requested for additional area but have received no response so far. Forest Ranger and other officers seldom visit our CF. So, in fact, we are managing our CF independently with hope to improve the forest and fulfil members' needs in future (Interviewee, Saraswoti CFUG, Lalitpur District).

Although many governance indicators show Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs are well functioning CFs, their decision making appears to be highly influenced by outsiders. Both CFUGs are influenced by donor-supported forestry projects and government officials. Godawarikunda CF is also located close to the Regional Forestry Training and Extension Centre and also to the Ilaka Forestry Office.

> We had been protecting surrounding forests informally since long ago – without any management, just protected, not allowing people to collect timber and firewood. As far as I remember, in early 1991, a Ranger from Forest Office (forgot the name!), came and informed us about CF process and provisions and asked to manage this forests as community forests with certificate and authority from DFO. Then we discussed and agreed to form a committee and manage forest as per CF guidelines. After formally registering the CF in 1997, we received support from DFO office, donors and many research institutions. We've changed many times our CF management objectives as per their advice. I think we have been made good progress from support of many people. I do not want say undue influence, but we got chance to learn new thing and can network with many organisations (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-4 Respondents views on influence of external agencies. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of influence (5, no influence by external agencies and 1, high influence by external agencies)[6] and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (mi ddle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

The *Forest Act* 1993 and Forest Regulations 1995 assume that a CFUG is an autonomous and self- sustaining institution. They should be able to make their own decision. Furthermore, the influence of external agencies may be counterproductive in terms of governance outcomes. However, empirical evidence gathered for this research suggests that the larger the contribution from external agencies such as DFO, FECOFUN and other civil society organisations, the better the governance outcomes. For example, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs are more influenced by external agencies but they also perform better on a range of other governance indicator. The research concludes that external facilitation is still important for the sustainable management of CFs, as this provides opportunities for CFUG members to better access information and interact with, and learn from, outside experts. The

[6] See Annex I part D for futher details

main reasons for such improved governance outcomes from external facilitation are interaction, synergy, and cross fertilization among CFUGs and other stakeholders. This point will be further elaborated on in the synthesis and conclusion (Chapter 8).

6.2.5 CLARITY OF GOALS AND TARGETS

CFUGs identify long, medium and short term goals in their operational plans and also establish annual targets at annual planning meetings or AGMs. Clear goals and targets assist CF management and facilitate the monitoring of progress. The main objective of CFs is to provide the daily required forest products for local communities. However, in many cases they often protect the forest without considering immediate user requirements. Further, many users prefer to manage the forest for easy access to fodder and fuelwood, while the CFOP often focuses on timber management for revenue collection. Respondents' opinion regarding the clarity of CF goals and targets is represented in Figure 6-5. The Godawarikunda and Saraswoti CFUGs have very clear goals and targets to meet members' demands.

> Our CF is located in strategic place and near the city. We receive many visitors from country and abroad. Therefore we are trying to make our CF as a model CF. Besides, focusing on supply of fuelwood and timber, CF has set out a goal for ecotourism and facilitating CF research in collaboration with government and international organisation such as ICIMOD. This is a unique in our CF and all users are happy to agree in AGM with these goals and activities (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

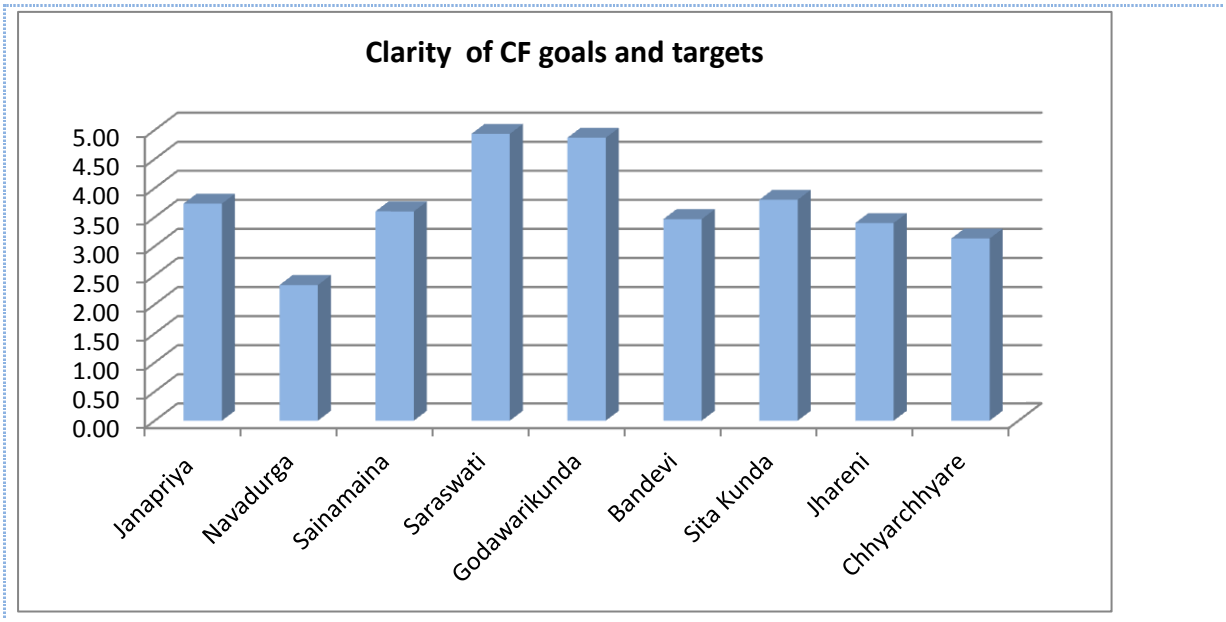
Many respondents express their satisfaction over CF management activities but were unaware of the goals and targets in those CFUGs:

> I do not know much about goals and targets. I feel that we need to protect the forest for firewood and timber. I can read and write but do not understand much about technical matters associated to forest management. The chairperson of the committee

> says that our CF is very small and we have to participate in the plantation of firewood species. I agree with others and am participating in CF management process without much knowledge (Interviewee, Saraswoti CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast, Navadurga CF is a degraded forest with very poor growing stock while Chhyarchhyare CF has a small forest area compared to user numbers and is unable to supply the required forest products as set out in its operational plan. In some of these CFUGs, members were poorly consulted about CF programme development:

> I do not know what the goals of our CF are and are to be. Only few people are active in CF process and they do not consider the views of the majority of members. I feel that goals of CF are also set by those elite people benefitting from them. They do not give access for firewood collection but I heard they sell timber from CF to outsiders (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-5 Respondents views on clearness of CF goals and targets. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of clearness of CF goals and targets (5, very clear goals and targets and 1, no clear goals and targets)[7] and name of study CF located in Terai (left) Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

[7] See Annex I part D for futher details

Lack of knowledge is often seen as a problem in setting appropriate CF goals:

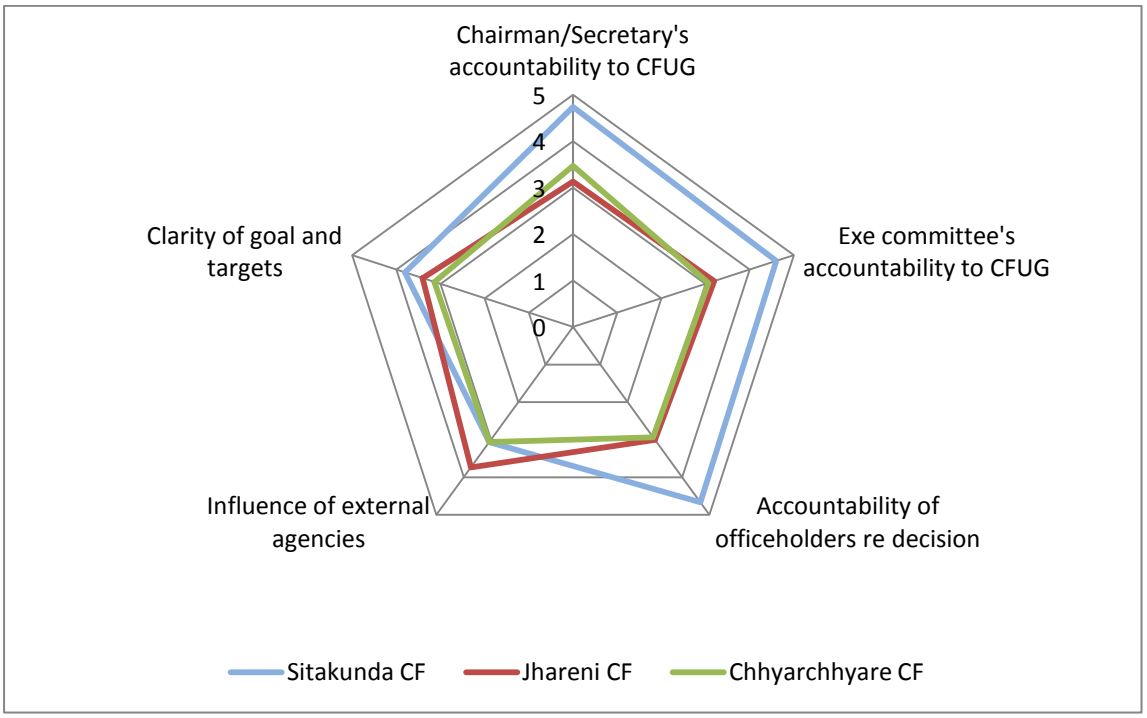
> We do not know much about CF goals and how to set them. We are not receiving much support from male members of CFUG. We have also not received timely supports from Forest Office and Ranger in our CF. So we are working on ad hoc basis, and do not know whether we are going in right direction or not.... (Interviewee, Chhyarchhyare CFUG, Dolakha District).

The empirical results of the study show that many CF users are not oriented to the changing goals and targets of CF, moving from conservation to manage forests for livelihoods and economic prosperity. In the changing context, appropriate and clearly spelt out goals and targets help in assessing the success of a CF. In the past, CF management had focused on conservation. After many years of conservation, many CFs are now very dense and have high potential for commercial management. Based on field observations, document review, discussion with key informants and visual observation of the bio-physical condition of CFs, there is an opportunity for business oriented CFs to enhance revenues by revising their CFOPs. However, due to lack of timely revision of CFOPs and the failure to modify management goals and targets, CFUGs are not currently capitalising on their potential.

6.2.6 STATUS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN DOLAKHA DISTRICT – HIGH MOUNTAIN

The context, associated issues and status of community forestry varies according to physiographic zone: from the Terai to High Mountain regions. The assessment of various indicators of accountability and its meaning in community forestry is based on context and geography. In this section, CFUG members' views on various indicators of accountability are assessed for three CFUGs in Dolakha district. The comparison of various governance indicators among three CFUGs is presented in the form of a radar diagram in Figure 6-6.

An inspection of the radar diagram shows that Sitakunda CFUG is accountable to CFUG members and performs well compared to Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs across four out of five indicators. However, decision making process in Sitakunda is highly influenced by external agencies, primarily because of the proximity of forest offices. Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs show a moderate level of accountability across all five indicators.

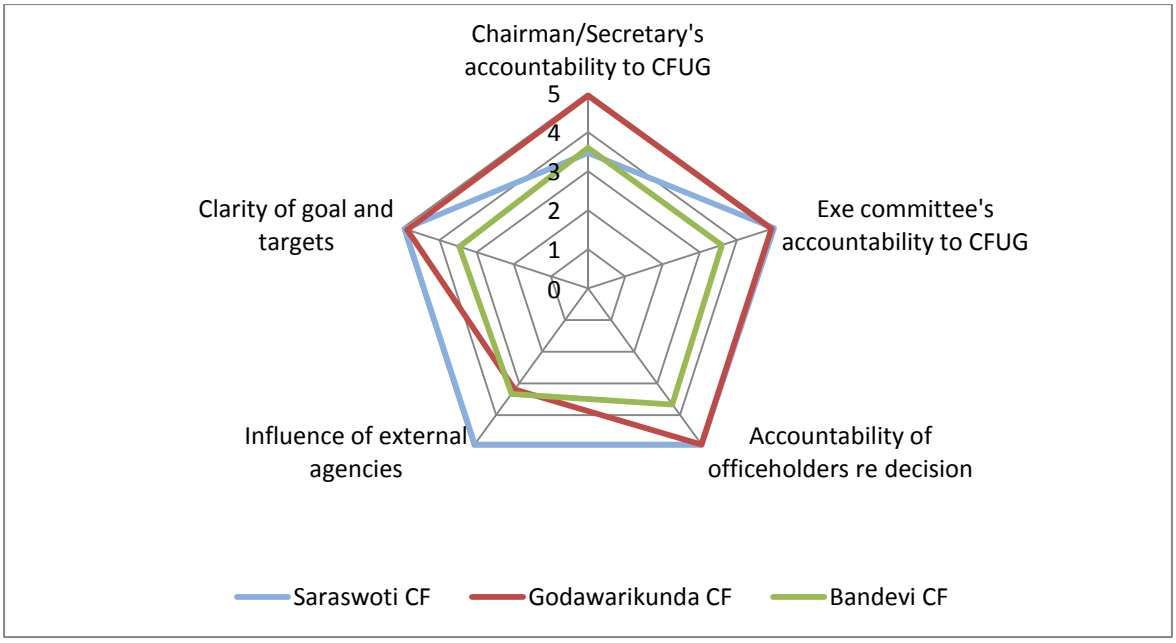


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-6 Status of accountability in study CFUGs in Dolakha District

6.2.7 STATUS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN LALITPUR DISTRICT - MID-HILLS

Three CFUGs-- Saraswoti, Godawarikunda and Bandevi of Lalitpur district-- were taken as the sample for the comparative study of level of accountability in the Mid-Hills. The data presented in Figure 6-7 reveals that Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs have relatively high levels of accountability. Furthermore, the Godawarikunda CF is one of the oldest CFs in the district and, being located close to the city and Ilaka Forest Office, has received a lot of support from the District Forest Office. The education level of the Godawarikunda CFUG members is high as many of them have access to computers and the internet. The chairperson and secretary of Saraswoti CFUG were perceived to be less accountable to CF members. Many decisions of Godawarikunda CF were perceived to be influenced by the external agencies such as District Forest Office, Ilaka Forest Office and donor agencies. In contrast, Bandevi CFUG is functioning poorly across all indicators of accountability used in this analysis. Bandevi CFUG users come from indigenous ethnicities and *dalits* with a poor socio-economic background, which is critically affecting their capacity to exercise accountability. Moreover, they have comparatively poorer levels of awareness and very few CF members are active in CF conservation and management.

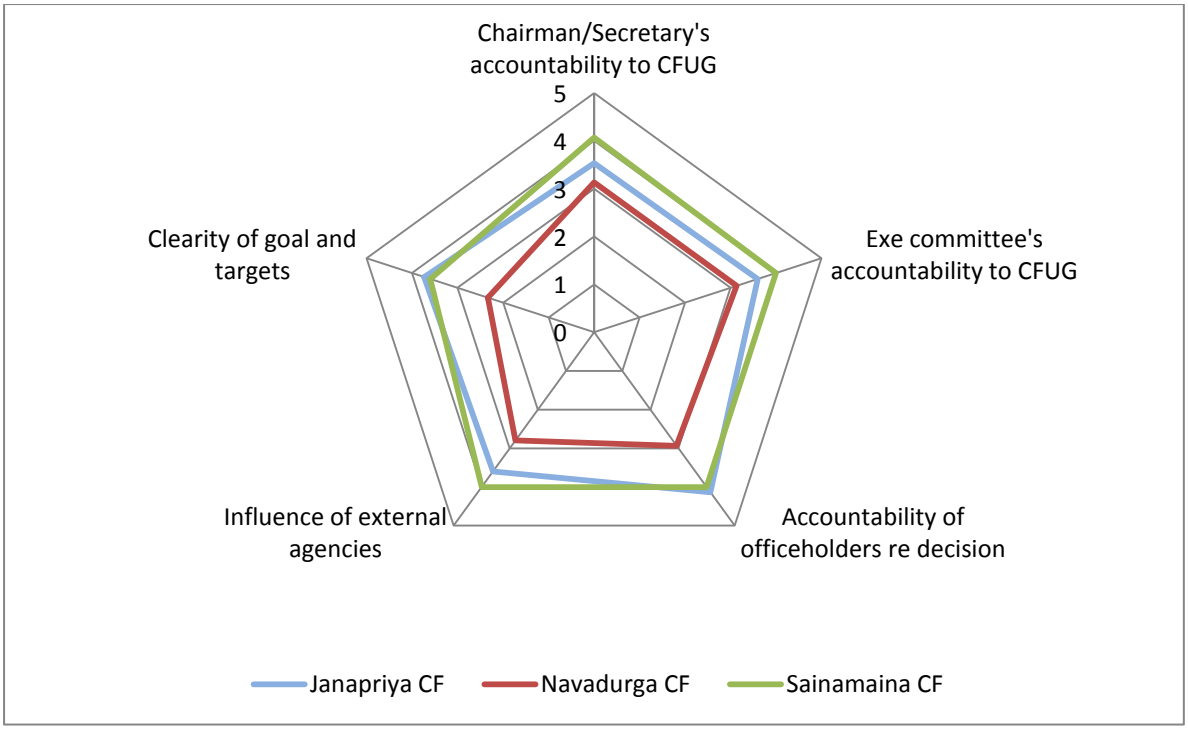


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-7 Accountability status in study CF in Lalitpur District

6.2.8 STATUS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN RUPANDEHI DISTRICT - TERAI

Three CFUGs -- Janapriya, Navadurga and Sainamaina of Rupandehi District -- were selected as the sample for a comparative study of the level of accountability in the Terai. The data presented in Figure 6-8 in the form of radar diagram. Similar to Lalitpur District in the Mid-Hills, a clear difference in performance across the various indicators of accountability is found among CFUGs in Rupandehi district. Navadurga CFUG was perceived to perform the poorest in accountability; while Sainamaina performed better and Janapriya CFUG the best. The poor accountability of Navadurga CFUG was mainly due to the presence of Madhesi people with low level awareness of what CF management entails. The key people who control the CFUG are mainly interested in the financial benefits, and CF management is carried out without clear goals and targets.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-8 Accountability status in study CFs in Rupandehi District

The study confirms that status of accountability in the *Terai* Region is comparatively weak compared to CFUGs in the High Mountain and Mid Hills regions. This appears to be due to the *Terai* region's heterogonous population, the very short history of CF management, and corruption at various levels.

6.3 EFFECTIVENESS

CFUGs are expected to achieve the expressed objectives of CFUG members as set out in the management plan. The effectiveness of governance arrangements is assessed using the following set of indicators: effectiveness of constitution and operational plan, objectives of forest management, implementation of meeting decisions, and CFUG's dispute resolution process. Each indicator was assessed and the results are presented in the following sections.

6.3.1 STRUCTURE OF CF OPERATIONAL PLAN

The CF operational plan (CFOP) should deliver the desired outcomes of CFUG members. The CFOP is expected to secure high quality forest management as well as deliver needed forest products to users. Further, the structure and content of the CFOP is not determined by the CFUG alone, but is guided by Forest Regulations and associated directives. According to Nepal's CF Guidelines (2009), the key content of a CFOP are: (i) details of the CF, such as, name, boundaries, areas, condition and types of forest; (ii) map showing block division and associated details such as areas, major species , slope, aspect soil type, age and situation in respect to natural regeneration and tree planting; (iii) forest management objectives; (iv) silvicultural activities such as bush clearing, thinning, pruning etc; (v) community nursery, tree plantation, income generating activities; (vi) details of areas suitable for medicinal and aromatic plants cultivation programmes and time schedule; (vii) provisions relating to use of income accruing from the sale of forest products and other sources; (viii) provisions for penalties which may be imposed on users, ix) provisions relating to the protection of the wildlife; and (x) other matters prescribed by the Department of Forests. Based on this template, CFUGs can modify the structure of the operational plan to best meet their needs.

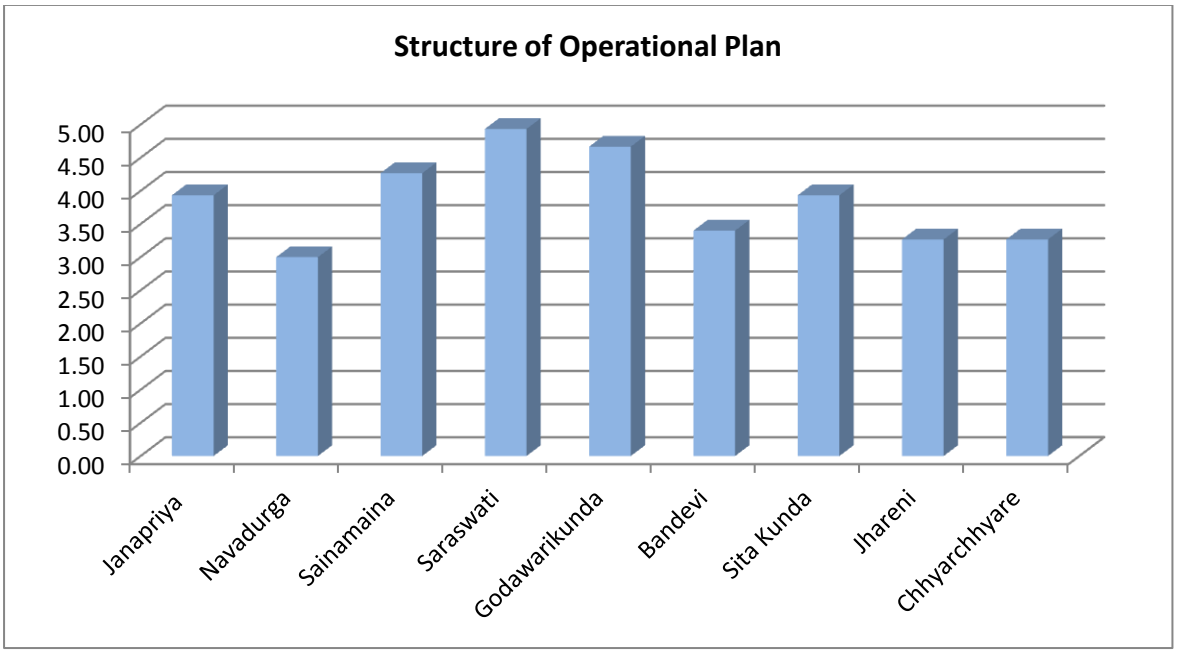
Respondents' opinions about the structure of their CFOP and its goals and targets are summarised in Figure 6-9. Members of Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs reported having a better understanding of the structure of their operational plans. Comments from key informants indicate a better perception of the content of OPs:

> In the preparation of the OP, the Forest Ranger and another technician provide help to the executive committee and other key members of CFUG to identify various management options and possible activities. Based on this, the committee prepares a draft OP, which is discussed with general members. I too contributed my ideas and I

> am aware of the content of our OP (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CGUG, Lalitpur District).

In many CFUGs, however, the understanding of the content and importance of the CFOP among some executive members and most of general members is relatively poor. For example, participants in Sainamaina, Janapriya and Sitakunda CFUGs only moderately understood the structure of their operational plans. In the remaining CFUGs, users reported having a limited understanding of their operational plans which constitutes evidence of low user interest, weakening effectiveness. Because capacity building process adopted for general users is poor, the understanding of the content of CFOP OP is limited:

> I do not know what the content of CFOP is. No one comes and discusses those issues with us. Now, I know little bit about the content from you. We need firewood and fodder from the forest, so we always request to be allowed to collect those products. We have very limited access so far... (Interviewee, Bandevi CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-9 Respondents' views on the structure and content of CF operational plan. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of clearness of CF goals and targets (5, the OP is appropriately structured to achieve expressed objectives of the user and 1, poorly structured) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

As the CFOP is a fundamental document for sustainable community forest management and for meeting the aspirations of a CFUG, it is thought to be important that it be prepared through rigorous discussion among users and that different interests be accommodated during its preparation. However, the results indicate that there are only a small number of CFUGs where the appropriate discussions are occurring with regard to the preparation of the CFOP.

6.3.2 STRUCTURE OF CF CONSTITUTION

The CFUG's constitution is a key element for CF governance. A CF general assembly promulgates the CF constitution and the success of a CF depends on having an effective and functional constitution.

A CFUG's constitution should be guided by Nepalese Forest Regulations and associated directives. These specify that a CFUG's constitution should include (CF Guideline, 2009): (i) name and address of the CFUG, (ii) objectives of the CFUG, (iii) stamp of CFUG, (iv) name and address of users, (v) number of households within the CFUG and estimated population, (vi) roles, responsibilities and rights of CFUG members, (vii) formation of executive committee , (ix) working procedures of the executive committee, (xi) methods to control forest violations, (xii) provisions for the punishment of user group members who violate the operational plan, (xii) working procedures to be followed whilst punishing user group members for violation of operational plan, (xiii) fund mobilisation procedures, (xiv) auditing procedures, and a range of other administrative matters.

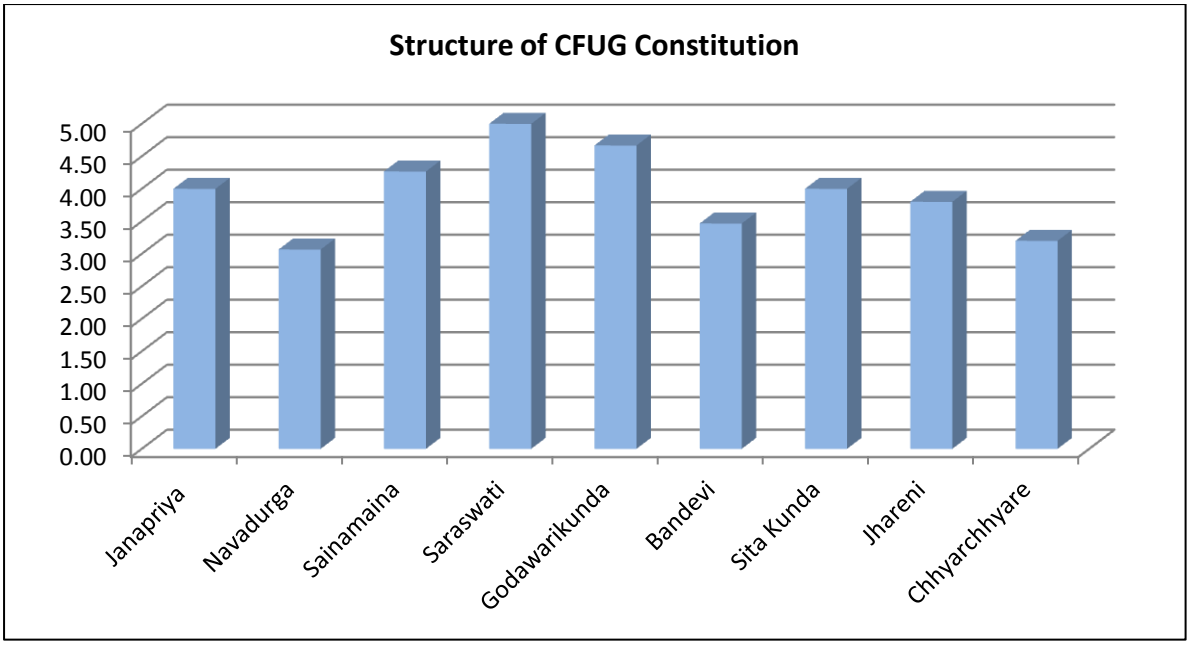
In spite of clear guidelines in the forest regulations and directives, the structure of CFUG constitutions varies enormously (Figure 6-10). Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs have

well structured constitutions that help to meet CFUG objectives; other CFUGs, however, lack certain elements which affect their achievement of sustainable forest management and users' expectations. The expression of contentment by CFUG members about the drafting process is an indication of ownership by them of their CF constitution:

> The community forestry facilitator from District Forest Office in Lalitpur encouraged us to meet together and initiated initial discussion about importance of community forestry where a piece of nearby forest can be managed as CF. After we agreed to manage the patch of forest, we were involved in a series of meetings and discussions to prepare the CF constitution, the forest protection and management mechanisms, and benefit sharing mechanisms. We unanimously decided on the contents and structure of the constitution which was subsequently and approved... (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast to Godawarikunda CFUG, the situation is different in Navadurga CFUG in Rupandehi district where the CF members were not much consulted. CF members expressed their ignorance and dissatisfaction over the process:

> We heard a good story about community forestry and were interested to manage a nearby forest patch as community forest. Meanwhile, some of the social leaders came to me and put forward a CF proposal. One of the forest rangers came and proposed content and structure of CF. They do not listen to our problems and finalised CF constitution and CFOP. Since then we received surrounding forests but I do not know much about the constitution and its usefulness (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-10 Respondents' views on structure and contents of CF constitution. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of clearness of CF goals and targets (5, the constitution is appropriately structured to achieve expressed objectives of the user and 1, poor ly structured) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

It is generally understood that a CFUG's constitution and operational plan are prepared by CFUG members. There is supposed to be a rigorous discussion about the provisions of CFUG's operation and forest management options which are to be included in the CFOP. In fact, the CFUG constitution and operational plan are almost always prepared by forest rangers, supported by DFO or other donor-supported forestry projects, with minimum participation of CFUG members. Forest rangers provide a copy of the plan to the CF chairperson which are then put to executive committee meetings and/or general assembly meetings. Executive and general assembly meetings approve the constitution and CFOP and it is then submitted to the DFO to obtain final approval. The lack of involvement of CFUG members in the preparation of their constitution and CFOPs reduces their willingness to engage in, and effectiveness of, CF activities.

6.3.3 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF CF MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

CFUGs are the fundamental community forestry organisation existing under the community forestry regime in Nepal and have the authority to make their own rules regarding the governance of community forests and group mobilisation (MFSC, 2013). The latest Community Forestry Guideline (2009) outlines the activities that CFs are entitled to undertake and include among other things (i) to manage forests to meet the people's basic needs for firewood, fodder, timber and other forest products, and also contribute to agricultural production through agro-forestry practices; and (ii) to protect the land from landslides and degradation by soil erosion, floods, and so forth. Some CFs have focused more on meeting peoples basic needs, while others have focused on timber management, ignoring members' demands. Field surveys indicate that Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFs are fully achieving their objectives (Figure 6-11). Many CF members were highly satisfied with the results achieved by successful implementation of CF constitution and operation plan:

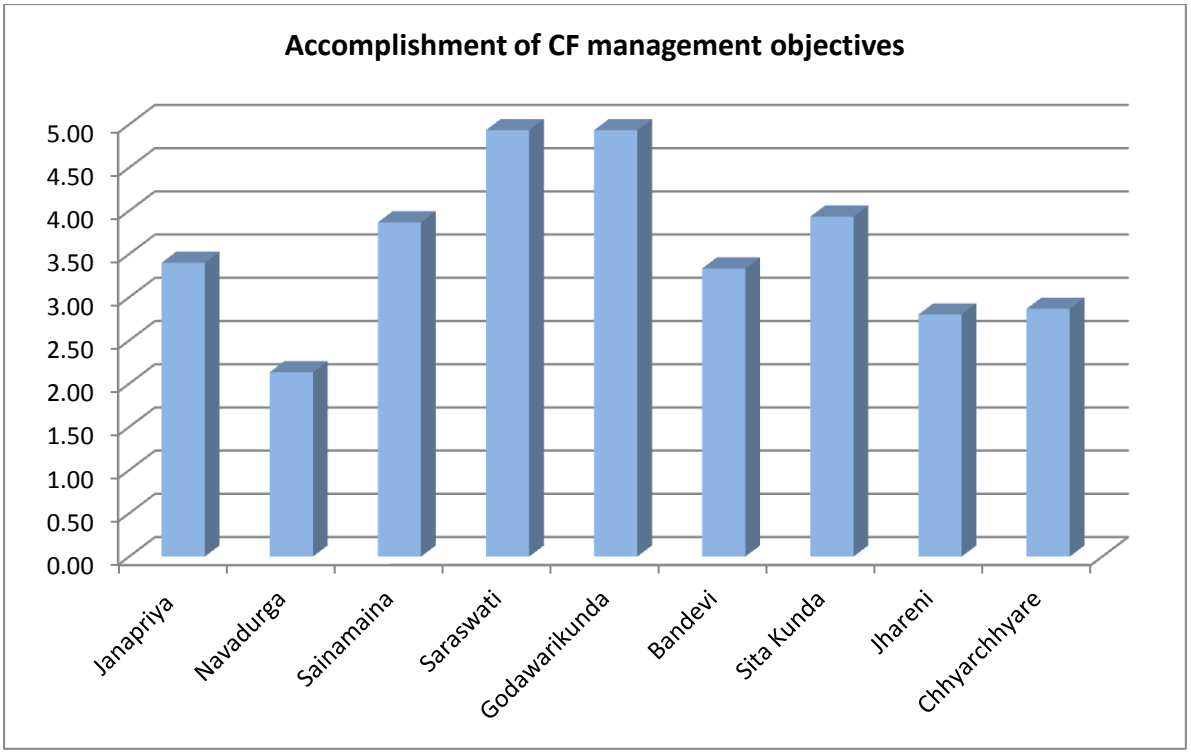
> I am no expert on forest management and cannot explain what should be the best management objective of CF. However, we are happy because executive committee members come to discuss our needs and they are reflected in the management objectives and strategies of the CF and various meeting were conducted during preparation of CFOP. We also participated in various activities of the CF. I heard from a forest officer in the last AGM that our CFUG is very good in working according to meet its management objectives (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

It is observed that there is considerable room to improve the management objectives of many CFUGs to address the present needs and economic prosperity of CF users. In line with this, some CF users urge that CF management at present is only adopting a subsistence approach, is working with limited objectives and scope, and ignoring a huge potentiality to develop the CF. One participant noted:

> Our CF is in strategic location--one of the nearest CFUGs to the capital. There are a number of forestry related offices and research institutions also located in Godavari. Godavari is also famous for its botanical garden and picnic spot. Therefore, our CF has the opportunity to tap additional income from tourism. I feel that our CF can be managed for eco-tourism, which is for recreation, hiking, picnic spot, and can be developed as an open school for learning about community forestry. However, I do not see our executive committee putting any vision into these opportunities (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

Of the CFUGs studied, Navadurga CFUG is remarkable in failing to achieve its management objectives in spite of clear efforts at implementation. There are many objectives contained in its CFOP, but these are not considered enough during implementation. The most important objective stated in the CFOP is supplying firewood to users, but most of respondents complained that they had limited access to firewood, which is a pressing problem in general for CF members. One participant noted:

> We heard that supplying firewood is an objective of our CF but we are not allowed to go to forests for firewood collection. They allow us just two days each winter but that is not enough for us. We poor members feel that executive committee members have no time to review the CFOP's objectives and provisions. They do whatever they think and like keeping the CFOP in the cupboard. I am not alone and many others feel that they [executive members] are working for their personal benefits (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-11 Respondents' views on accomplishment of CF management objectives. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of clearness of CF goals and targets (5, the objectives fully met and 1, objectives not met) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

There is a general consensus in the literature that appropriately developed CF constitutions and OPs guide overall CF management (MFSC, 2013) and help to accomplish CF management objectives. However, this study found that a good constitution and OP are not sufficient to achieve such goals and that regular effective meetings are also important as they help to break down broad management objectives in to achievable time-bound outputs. Further, dedicated efforts of executive members and decision making through consultation with CF users help in achieving the management objectives of CF.

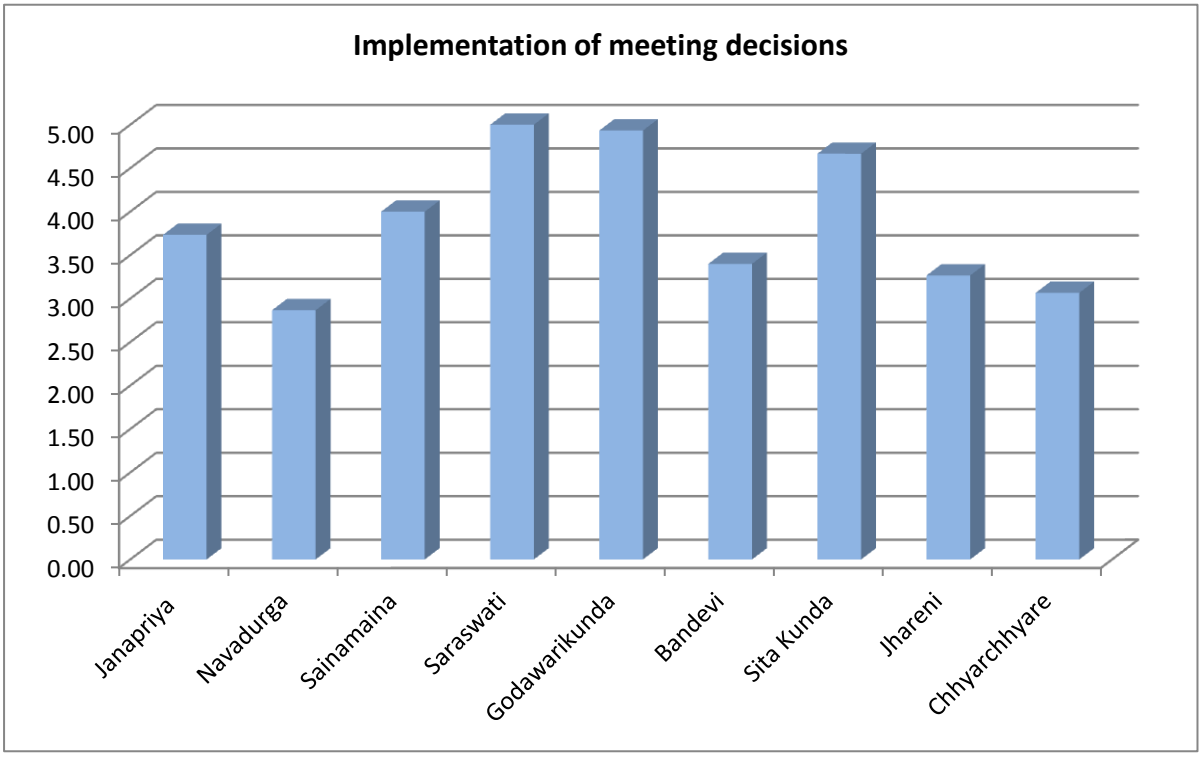
6.3.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF MEETING DECISIONS

An executive committee is responsible for representing the CFUG and for carrying out the CFUG's day-to-day activities, including the implementation of forest management plans and the mobilisation of the group. Usually, executive committees meet monthly and make a range of decisions associated with forest management and internal group management. In many cases, decisions are implemented effectively; however there are many cases where they are not implemented and followed up and various reasons are given (Figure 6-12). Saraswoti, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda are the best performing CFUGs in terms of implementation of meeting decisions so that the forest are better protected, managed and able to provide required products to users. The implementation of meeting decisions is key process for successful outcomes:

> I am a new member in the executive committee. Experienced members of the committee take leading role in the meetings and decision making. The good thing in our CFUG is we give responsibility to one of the members of executive committee for coordination for implementation of specific plan. In the next meeting, the responsible member should brief the outputs of action as decided in the previous meeting. I am also learning gradually and feel proud for better result. Once in a meeting last year, the chief of the District Forest Office commended the process of decision making and implementation of our CFUG (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast, the study found that Navadurga and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs are poor at implementing meeting decisions and thus frequently unable to meet users' demands. Both CFUGs have degraded forests and produce insufficient forest products to supply users' requirements. It was also found that several CFUGs do not review the decisions taken at the last meeting and thus do not uncover the problem if there are implementation difficulties. CF members do not believe that a CFUG's decisions made in a meeting will be implemented:

We request that the executive committee give priority to our demands associated with forest products. As a result of pressure from many users, they make several decisions about the use of forest products but do not implement the decisions. They always postpone the date of implementation of the decisions from this week to next week and so on. They usually implement the decisions that are beneficial to the elites. Most users including me do not believe that decisions on anything will be changed easily (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-12. Respondents' views on implementation and enforcement of meeting decisions. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of implementation of meeting decisions (5, implemented all decisions and 1, not implemented at all) and name of study CF located in in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

The empirical results reveal that preparation of good goals, plans and programmes alone is not sufficient to achieve the objectives of community forestry. Breaking down the overall goals and plans into detailed activities through successive meetings and discussions is equally important for effective implementation and contributes to overall group governance of CFUG.

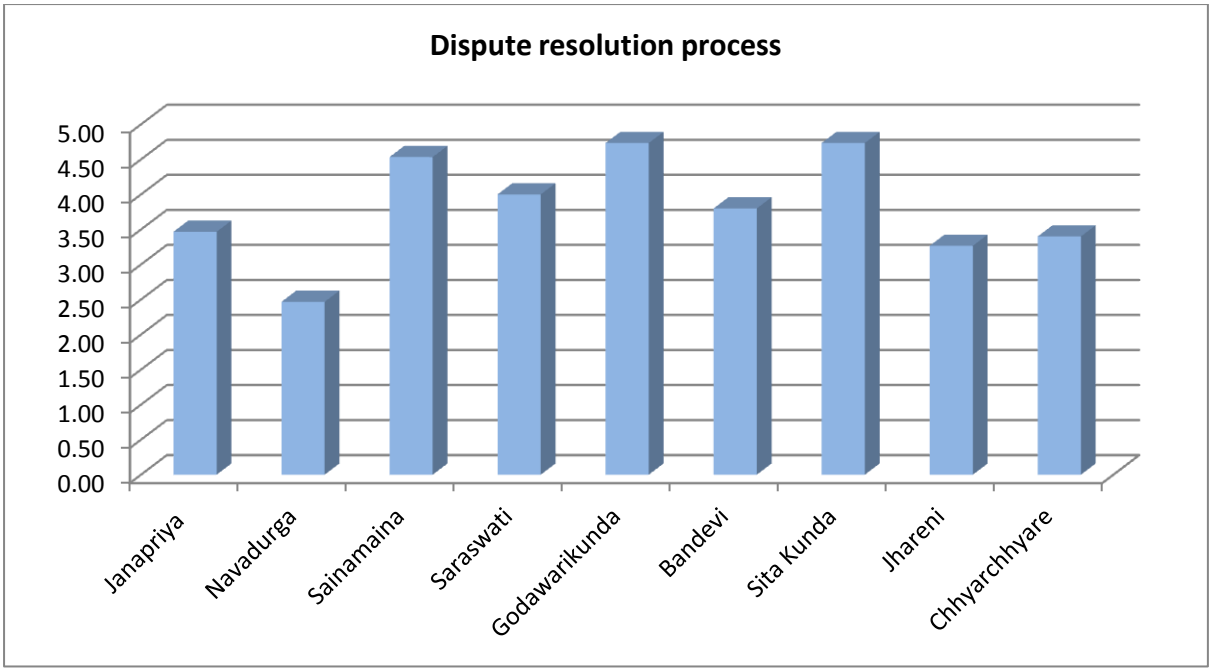
6.3.5 DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

The term ‘dispute’ carries negative connotations. Dispute or ‘conflict’ may arise between various community forestry actors due to various reasons, such as forest management plan preparation, access to forest products and benefit sharing, and changing government policies. Disputes can be categorised into different types based on whether they occur among community groups or between community groups, private parties and civil society organisations. The various types of dispute arising in community forestry are summarised below (Nightingale and Sharma, 2014):

- disputes over land ownership and associated resources (e.g., between private and communal land owners);
- disputes over property boundaries between community groups and private landowners;
- disputes because decision making process is controlled by elites;
- disputes due to the breaking of CF constitutional or operational rules (e.g., illegal collection forest products);
- disputes regarding the choice of forest management priorities; and
- disputes over perceived unfair distribution of benefits.

Appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms are the key to successful CF implementation. This study revealed that different dispute resolution processes are used in different CFUGs (Figure 6-13). Highly participatory, consultative and win-win dispute resolution processes are in operation in Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs. As one key informant described the situation when reflecting on community forestry and conflict resolution:

> Community forestry itself is a conflict resolution process. The success of CF depends on timely management of disputes. In the case of a serious dispute, we visit the CFUG, meet the conflicting parties, identify the sources of the dispute and mediate to resolve the dispute. We have noticed this is the key to successful implementation of CF in Dolakha district and believe that this can be replicated to other parts of Nepal (Interviewee, Dolakha district).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-13 Respondents' views on dispute resolution process. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of clearness of dispute resolution process (5, highly participatory, consultative and win-win and 1, coercive OP is appropriately structured to achieve expressed objectives of the user and 1, poorly structured) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

The level of participatory and consultative processes for dispute resolution is moderately satisfactory in Sainamaina, Saraswoti and Bandevi CFUGs. A much lower participatory and less consultative process is being practiced in the remaining CFUGs. CF members have a number of grievances with regard to dispute resolution processes:

> There are a variety of disputes within our CFUG, such as competing interests in defining management objectives focusing on firewood verses timber production, the access time and season for the collection of firewood, priorities for the use of CFUG funds, decisions favouring elites, and so on. Elite members of executive committee form a dispute resolution sub-committee composed of persons they favour. They do not invite representatives from District Forest Office and FECOFUN district chapter. I think they are afraid of outsiders who might expose their wrong activities. So they also make drama by meeting to resolve conflicts but do not make concrete decisions - nothing more than time wasting time and postponing issue as far as possible. Sometimes, we users with different interests informally sit together and resolve our own problems. When we go CFUG executive committee with our solution, they do not agree claiming they needed to be present. I feel that intervention from the DFO office is necessary. But I do not see how they can do it, because social elites are able

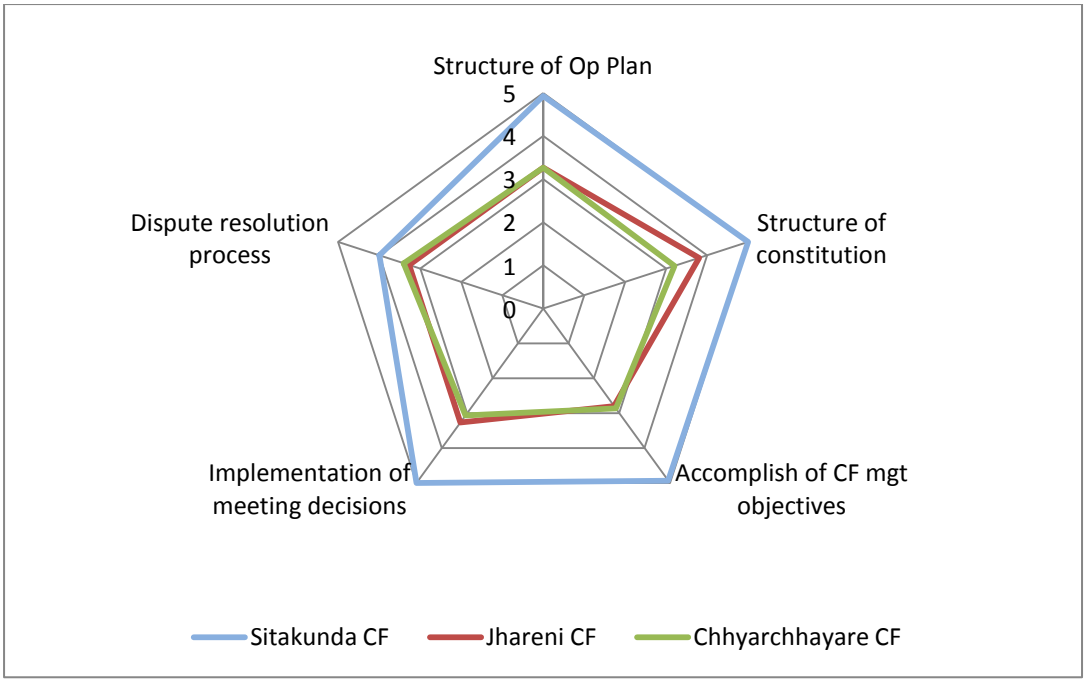
> to make good relations with governance officials (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

Another respondent from Bandevi CFUG, Lalitpur District also presented a similar response which shows the lack of clear and effective conflict resolution processes in those CFUGs.

There is a general consensus among scholars that the lower the conflict, the better the governance is in community forests (MFSC, 2013; Poudel et al., 2011; Pokharel et al., 2009). This study showed that conflict is not necessarily a bad thing, providing timely and effective resolution mechanisms are in place to help a CF to perform better. This result also corroborates other studies undertaken by various scholars (Varughese and Ostrom, 2001; Banjade and Ojha, 2005).

6.3.6 STATUS OF EFFECTIVENESS IN DOLAKHA DISTRICT – HIGH MOUNTAIN

Respondents' views on indicators of effectiveness in three CFUGs in Dolakha District are depicted in the radar diagram (Figure 6-14). Sitakunda CFUG seems to be the most effective CFUG and performs well across all indicators compared to Jhareni and Chhyarchhyare. However, the effectiveness in its dispute resolution process needs to be improved compared to other indicators. Sitakunda is one of the oldest CFUGs in Dolakha district, and the local community of Sitakunda was protecting the surrounding forest for 30 years before it was officially handed over to the communities in 1997. This long experience in CF management has enhanced its effectiveness.

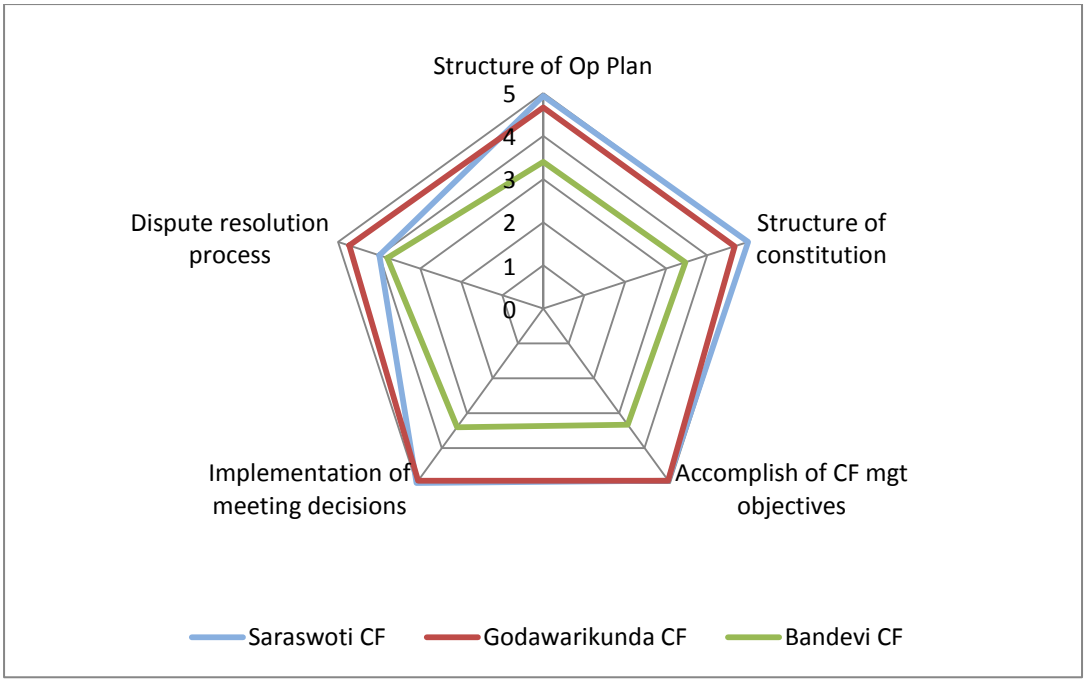


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-14 Status of effectiveness in study CFUGs in Dolakha District

6.3.7 STATUS OF EFFECTIVENESS IN LALITPUR DISTRICT - MID-HILLS

Community forestry users' views on various indicators of the effectiveness in three CFUGs in Lalitpur district is presented in a radar diagram (Figure 6-15). Godawarikunda and Saraswoti CFUGs seem to be the most effective CFUGs across all indicators compared to Bandevi CFUG. However, the effectiveness of Saraswoti CF's dispute resolution process needs to be improved further in comparison to other indicators. The Godawarikunda CF is one of the oldest CFUGs in Lalitpur district, where local communities have been protecting surrounding forests for many years. Because of this long experience, the CF perceived to be effectively managed.



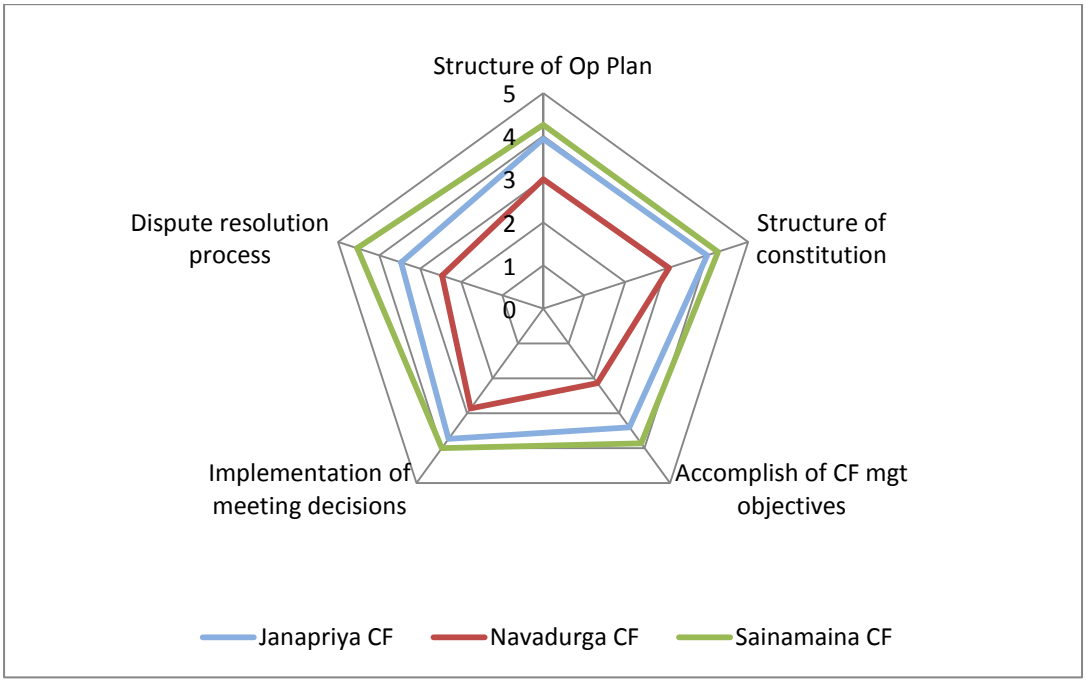
(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-15 Status of effectiveness in study CFUGs in Lalitpur District

6.3.8 STATUS OF EFFECTIVENESS IN RUPANDEHI DISTRICT - TERAI

Three CFUGs, Janapriya, Navadurga and Sainamaina, of Rupandehi Districts were taken as the sample for comparative study of level of effectiveness in the Terai, with the data presented in Figure 6-16. Similar to Lalitpur District in Mid-Hills, there is a clear distinction between various indicators of effectiveness in Rupandehi District. Navadurga CFUG is perceived to perform the poorest in effectiveness, while Sainamaina performs better followed by Janapriya CFUG. The poor perceived effectiveness of Navadurga CF is mainly due to the low level of awareness of the *Madhesi* people in CF management and the fact that the key people controlling the CF are perceived to be interested only on the financial benefits they can obtain from it. Furthermore, the CF management is perceived as being carried out without clear goals or targets.

The study confirms other studies MFSC, 2013; Pokharel et al., 2012) that the status of effectiveness of community forests in Terai Region is weak compared to its operation in Mid-Hills and High-Mountains. This appears to be due to the heterogonous population dynamics in the Terai Region, the very short history of CF management, and the desire to exploit Tarai's productive forests.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 6-16 Status of effectiveness in study CF in Rupandehi District

6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reported the results of two important elements of governance, accountability and effectiveness, using a range of associated indicators. Five indicators for each element were identified and analysed in order to assess the status of accountability and effectiveness in CF governance. The results demonstrate that accountability and effectiveness can be assessed at local level using five basic indicators. The substantial variations in accountability and effectiveness among CFUGs reflects differences in socio-economic status and biophysical condition as well as management objectives.

It is generally considered that the CF program is successful in Mid-Hills but is not appropriate for the Terai Region. The empirical results of this study show that geography is not the determining factor for successful community forestry. A CF is successful providing that attention is paid to key indicators of governance during CF development and management. For example, Sainamaina CFUG in Rupandehi District is performing as well as many other CFUGs in Lalitpur (e.g., Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUG) and Dolakha (e.g., Sitakunda CFUG). In terms of accountability and effectiveness it is performing comparatively better than Janapriya CFUG of Rupandehi District and Chhyarchhyare CFUG of Dolakha District.

The study confirms that CF success rests on how accountable key position holders and other executives are during decision making and implementation. The study shows that accountability in CFUGs increases with years of experience in CF management. In many cases, it is influential and key position holders such as an active chairperson and secretary that can make a CFUG accountable and effective. The research shows that a lack of capacity building and regular follow up monitoring from government and other stakeholders results in

a deterioration in the level of accountability among CFUGs. Being an autonomous and self-sustaining institution, it is often argued that a CFUG must be able to make its own decisions and that external influence is counterproductive in many cases. However, in the case of Nepal, CF decisions are the result of joint inputs by many development actors including DFO, FECOFUN and other civil society organisations including international agencies and donor communities. In such cases, synergy, interaction and cross-fertilization of knowledge among CFUGs and other stakeholders can significantly advance the CF process.

The operation of CFUGs is based mainly on the CF constitution and operational plan, prepared through consensus of CFUG members and implemented by the same process. In a few cases, these documents have been prepared mainly with the support of DFO and/or other donor-supported forestry projects with minimum input from CFUG members, resulting in poorer governance in those CFUGs. However, regular meetings and discussions are found to be equally important as these help to break down the management objectives into achievable, time bound outputs for effective governance outcomes.

CHAPTER 7: ASSESSING DECENTRALISED COMMUNITY BASED FOREST GOVERNANCE – EFFICIENCY AND FAIRNESS/EQUITY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the final two elements of good, decentralized, community-based forest governance, efficiency and fairness/equity, using several locally identified indicators. First, it assesses the level of efficiency in each of the nine CFUGs using seven indicators. Next, the status of efficiency within each of the three different ecological zones is analysed. Third, fairness and equity in each CFUG is assessed using seven indicators. Finally, a regional assessment of efficiency, and fairness and equity, is undertaken for the Terai, Mid-Hills and High Mountains regions.

7.2 EFFICIENCY

Good governance is associated with the efficient management of forest resources, an enhanced managerial capacity of community group members, and adequate financial resources. In addition, efficiency denotes that the time and resources put in to forest management is adequately rewarded in outputs: that is, products and services available for users. In this study, a CF's efficiency is assessed using criteria related to the financial benefits obtained by CF users compared to the time and cost involved, peoples' rights to harvest forest products from a CF, use and adequacy of silvicultural systems, time management in meetings, forest products pricing systems and revenue collection systems.

7.2.1 FINANCIAL BENEFIT OF FOREST MANAGEMENT

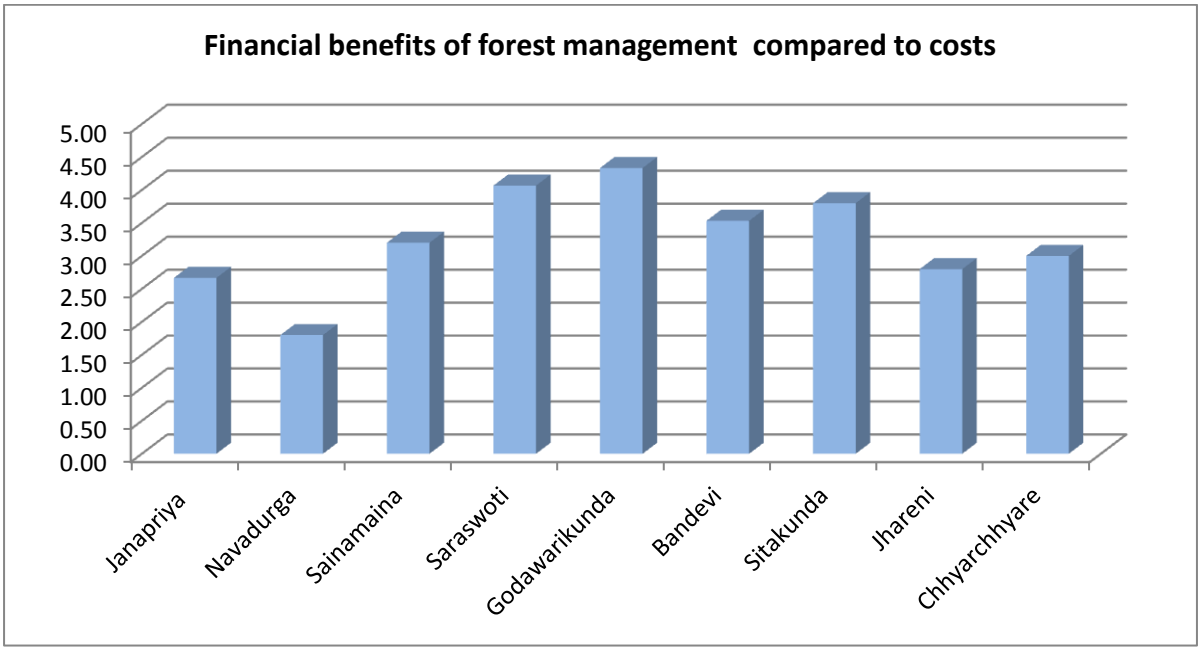
Local communities invest time and resources to manage their community forests and expect to receive financial benefits from using and conserving them. In fact, community-based forests must tangibly improve local economic welfare and generate local economic benefits at a sufficient level and in an appropriate form to offset the opportunity costs incurred of protection and management (Mogaka et al., 2001). There is generally little recognition by policy makers of the potentially high local economic costs of managing a community forest (Mogaka et al., 2001).

An assessment of people's perceptions of the financial benefits over the cost involved in community forest management in the study CFUG's is depicted in Figure 7-1. Respondents from Godawarikunda, Saraswoti, Sitakunda and Bandevi CFUGs perceived that the benefits outweighed the costs, while respondents from Sainamaina and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs perceived the benefits and costs were about the same. A member of Godawarikunda CFUG said:

> We are obtaining many products from our CF such as fodder, fuelwood and timber at minimum price. I don't know the actual market value of all these products but they are not cheap. The main cost is the annual membership fee and the time devoted to forest management annually. We mainly work in the forest during the winter season when there is not much work in the *khetbari* (private farm). Therefore in my opinion we are receiving more from the *prakirti ama* (Mother Nature) than we giving to her. In fact we are managing our forest for ourselves and our future, not for others (Interviewee, Godarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast, respondents from the remaining CFUGs of Janapriya, Navadurga and Jhareni were of the opinion that costs outweighed the benefits. Their views are reflected in the following comments from a member from Chhyarchhyare CFUG, who expressed his concern regarding the costs of forest management:

To me management of forest shouldn't be users role...as you can see I work seven days a week and it is often difficult to *hathmukh jorna* (feed my family) so how can I go and work in the forest which returns nothing to me?... I am participating in CF activities only because I don't want to be outside society but I can't see the benefit of managing forest at the moment... I am often inclined to think that the forest should be managed by government authorities (Interviewee, Chhyarchhyare CFUG, Dolakha District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-1 Respondents' views of the financial benefits of forest management compared to the costs of forest management. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of financial benefits over cost (5, the benefits considerably outweighed the costs involved and 1, , the costs considerably outweighed the benefits) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

The forests entrusted to Sitakunda, Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs have been well managed for several decades and are therefore in good condition. However, the Janapriya and Navadurga CFUGs only started managing their forests recently and have to invest more time and resources to improve the forests' condition. Although Jhareni CFUG has managed for 30 years what was initially almost barren forest land, revegetation has required considerable time and cost. CFUGs that have been well managed for a long time and/or where the forest is

in good biophysical condition can produce more products and services and associated revenues compared to those CFUGs which are poor and degraded.

7.2.2 ACCESS TO FOREST PRODUCTS

Generally, community groups protect and manage CFs to obtain access to forest products. According to Ribot and Peluso (2003: 153), 'access' to resources can simply be defined as, 'the ability to benefit from things'. Too many restrictions on a user's rights to harvest and use forest products will be viewed as unfair and users that do not have sufficient rights to harvest forest products from their CF may lose interest in participating in CF activities. Users require rights to harvest and utilise forest products to improve their livelihoods.

CFUG members expressed different opinions regarding their right to harvest forest products in the study CFs as shown in Fig 7-2. Users from Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFs seem to be highly empowered in harvesting and utilising forest products, while users from three other CFUGs have moderate levels of access. The study shows that in spite of the time and resources contributed by users from the remaining four CFUGs, they are discouraged from accessing forest products. This is mainly due to their lack of efficiency in forest management.

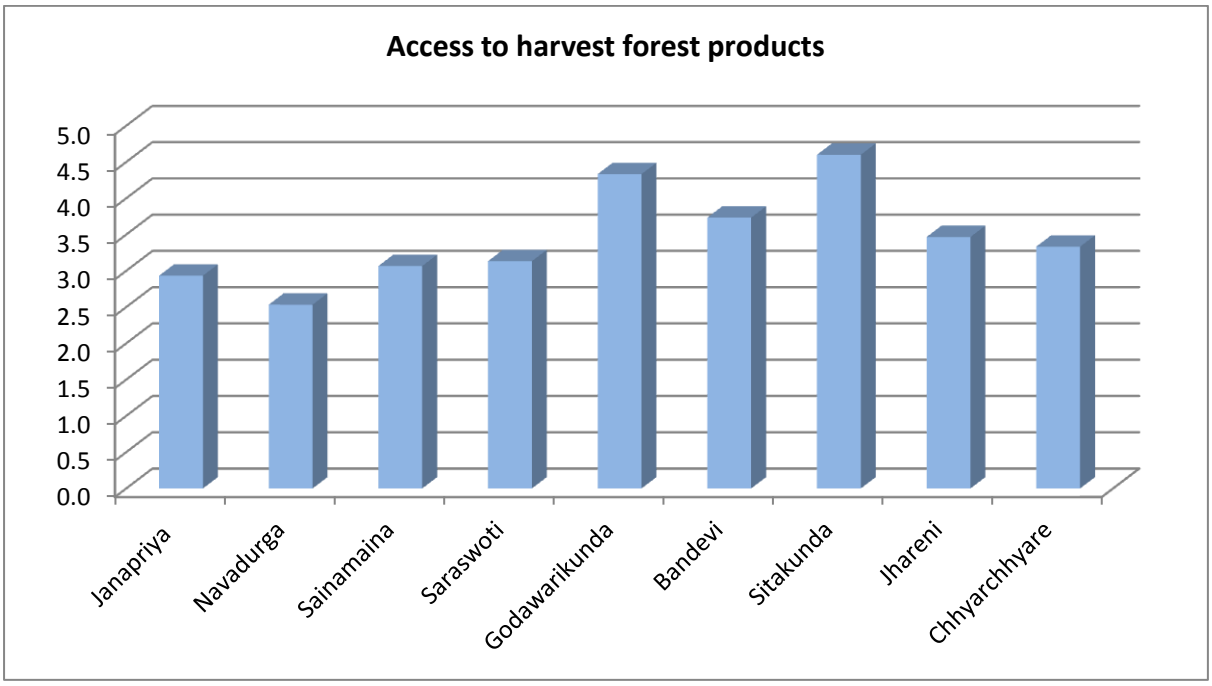
While many users stated they have sufficient access to CF resources, some argued that they did not have sufficient rights to access forest resources compared to their contribution. This can be observed from the comment of one participant below:

> I think we are having an appropriate level of access to forest products. Our forest management plan has clearly mentioned when and how we can access the products and the executive committee follows the procedure mentioned in the operational plan. There is a special provision for those in need and those affected by natural calamities such as fire (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast, a respondent from Navadurga CFUG in Rupandehi district expressed his concern regarding the restriction imposed on CF activities by government authorities:

> From two years ago, the District Forest Office has banned us from harvesting and utilizing any forest products from our CF. We are not getting any support from the District Forest Office (DFO). They are controlling us in every activity, we are not happy with the activity of DFO towards the community forestry (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

However, in the case of Navadurga CFUG, a focus group discussion and informal discussions with DFO staff and other stakeholders indicated that the current CFUG executive committee members were misusing the resources for their personal benefits. To control such misuses, the District Forest Office has banned the harvesting of forest products.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-2 Respondents' views on right to harvest/collect forest products that compensates CFUG members for their in-kind contribution. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of rights to collect forest products (5, very high level of right to harvest forest products) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.2.3 APPLICATION OF SILVICULTURAL SYSTEMS

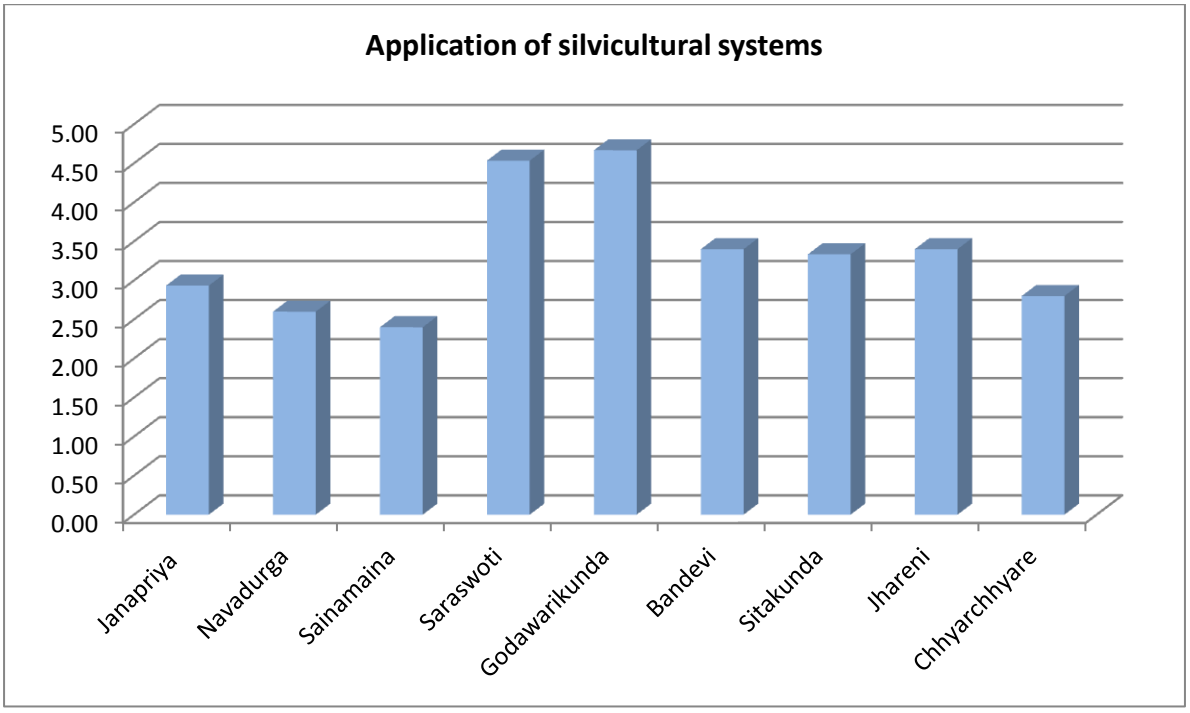
The choice of an appropriate silvicultural system is an important prerequisite for sustainable management of community forests. A silvicultural system is simply defined as a method of forest management for tending, harvesting and regenerating the forest (Forestry Nepal, 2014). The choice of an appropriate system is normally determined by the CFUG in consultation with forestry officials and described in the CF operational plan. However, the choice of system may change over time due to changing resource use objectives and forest condition. Various silvicultural systems have been practiced by CFUGs, although selective logging is the most commonly used silvicultural system in Nepal. According to one participant:

> Every year, we work on forests for more than a month as per the prescription of the CFOP in the period of February and March following GA. First, a forest block is assigned to each of the small groups formed at the GA who are enlisted to undertake the necessary activities to be done by each group for the year such as weeding, pruning, thinning of dense trees, selective felling for timber, and so on. We receive enough fuel wood for domestic use from pruning and thinning, while timber demand will be fulfilled from thinning and selective felling of old and mature trees. We are happy from activities done in CF as we are getting forest products to meet our needs as well as because our forest is beautiful... (Interviewee, Sitakunda CFUG, Dolakha District).

In contrast, a respondent from Navadurga CFUG in Rupandehi District expressed a concern regarding a perceived misuse of executive committee power related to CF management.

> In my opinion, the executive committee members of our CFUG are not following CF objectives and guidelines. They want immediate short term benefits and are not looking to the future. They interpret the silvicultural objectives and activities for their own benefit. For example, they are more focused on harvesting and selling timber products rather than on spending time on forest conservation and bush clearing, etc... I feel that there is mis-match between what they are saying and what they are doing... (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

Respondents' views on the application of silvicultural systems as set out in approved operational plans are shown in Figure 7-3. Results indicate that Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs are perceived to apply the correct silvicultural systems while others are either perceived to apply it incorrectly or to follow inappropriate silvicultural systems.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-3 Respondent's views on the use and application of a silvicultural system as set out in the approved operational plan. Numeric score in Y-axis represents respondents opinion (5, strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

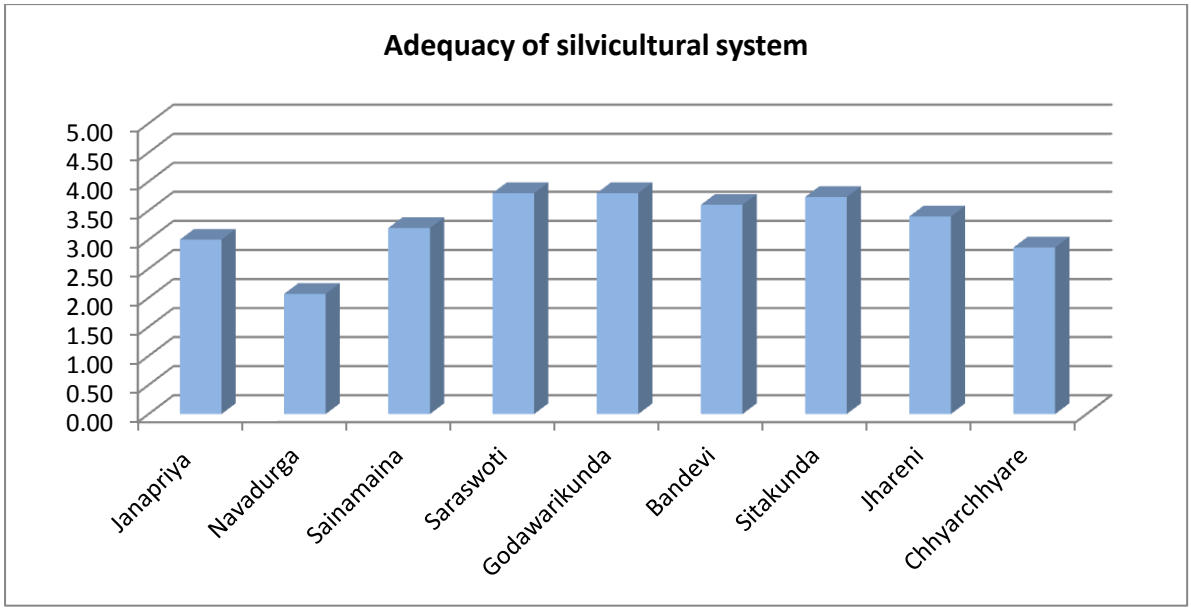
7.2.4 ADEQUACY OF SILVICULTURAL SYSTEM

An assessment of the adequacy of silvicultural systems to deliver the defined objectives of a CFUG can help to identify how efficiently the community forest is being managed. A good silvicultural system is a long-term program of treatment tailored to a specific set of circumstances. In the case of community managed forests, a rational silvicultural system should fit logically into the overall management plan for the community forest of which the

stand is a part and be optimally designed to satisfy the CFUG's requirements. More specifically (i) it should be in harmony with the CFUG's long term goals, (ii) efficiently use growing space and site productivity, (iii) control damage, and (iv) secure a sustained yield.

Respondents' opinions on the adequacy of silvicultural systems are depicted in Figure 7-4. The results indicate that Saraswoti, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs were perceived to apply the correct silvicultural system while others were perceived to apply it incorrectly or to follow inappropriate silvicultural systems as set out in the approved operational plans. Navadurga CFUG in particular was perceived as being very poor in implementing its silvicultural system. According to one respondent:

> There is huge misuse of forest products. Not enough trees are left for silvicultural purposes and only very old trees without many branches are left. Due to this misuse, the district forest office has banned harvesting old (*dhelepadheka*) trees. And committee members are now blaming the district forest office for not letting them do those activities (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-4 Respondents' perceptions of the adequacy of silvicultural systems to deliver the objects of the CFUGs. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of adequacy (5, more than adequate, and 1, not adequate) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

Some of the CFs, such as Saraswoti, Godawarikunda, Bandevi and Sitakunda, have applied many silviculture practices such as pruning, thinning and seasonal felling, resulting in forests that are in better condition. However, there is still a lot to be undertaken as prescribed in the CFOP. Janapriya and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs, for example, have focused only on protection of forests, despite including pruning, thinning and enrichment plantation activities in their CFOP.

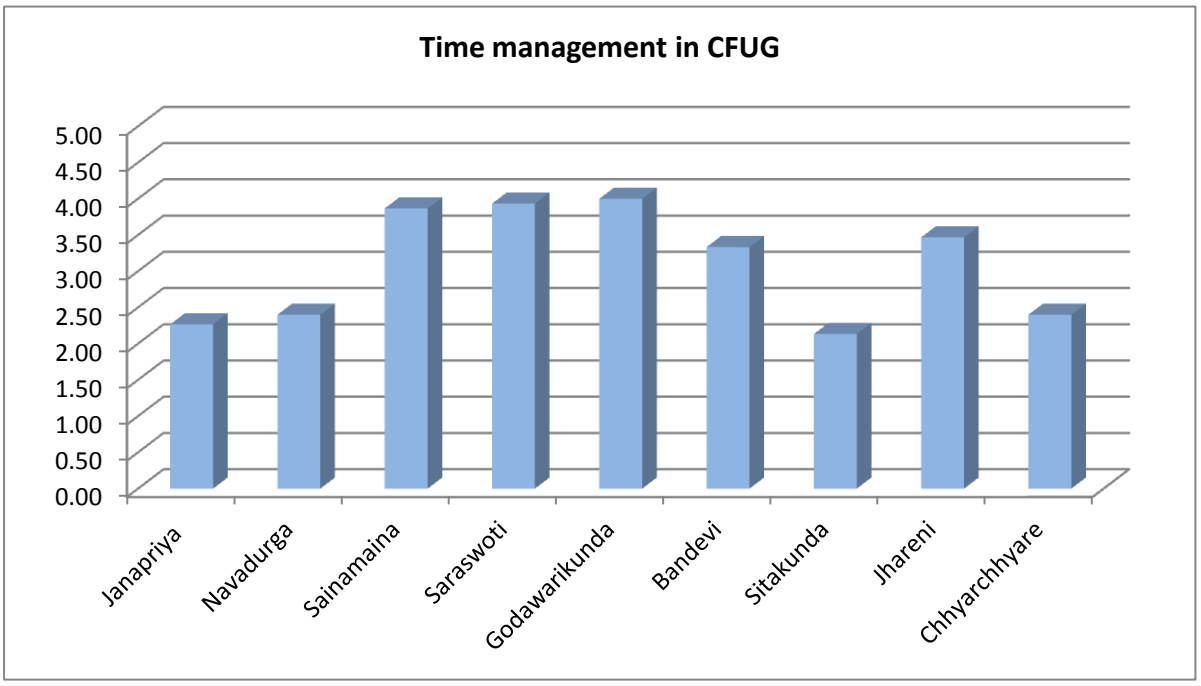
In spite of clear government rules, regulations and provisions in approved CFOPs, District Forest Offices recently (2013) instructed all CFUGs to stop any kind of logging operation until further notice. This has created great uncertainty among CFs with regard to silvicultural treatments. This is viewed as neither legally nor technically acceptable by local communities. The Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal has been lobbying to lift this informal ban but as of August 2014 little progress had been made. Neither the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation nor district forest offices are taking this issue seriously or are ready to lift the ban.

7.2.5 TIME MANAGEMENT

Good time management is a crucial element of success for any organisation. CF members have many demands on their time and their contribution to CFUG management is largely voluntary. Therefore, time management at meetings and general assemblies is an important indicator of efficiency. In many cases, time management was perceived to be poor as executive committee members and other members do not arrive on time and meetings are usually delayed.

Members of various CFUGs have different perceptions regarding how time is managed in meetings including annual general assemblies and these are presented in Figure 7-5. The results indicate that Sainamaina, Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs have better and more efficient time management arrangements in meetings while Janapriya, Sitakunda and Navadurga practise poor time management. The remaining CFUGs are perceived by their members to have moderate levels of time management. An example of poor time management practices and associated results is provided by the following interviewee:

> The meeting never starts on time. In the past, I used to arrive on time at the meeting venue but the organisers (chairperson and secretary) usually came one hour later ... I feel that the chairperson and secretary do not care about others' time and they think they are important people who can come anytime ... I have to look after my children and cattle at home and I am unable to waste my valuable time without any output... I was not pleased with the situation and after few months I stopped attending the meeting... I feel that this is hindering women's participation in community forestry (Interviewee, Jhareni CFUG, Dolakha District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

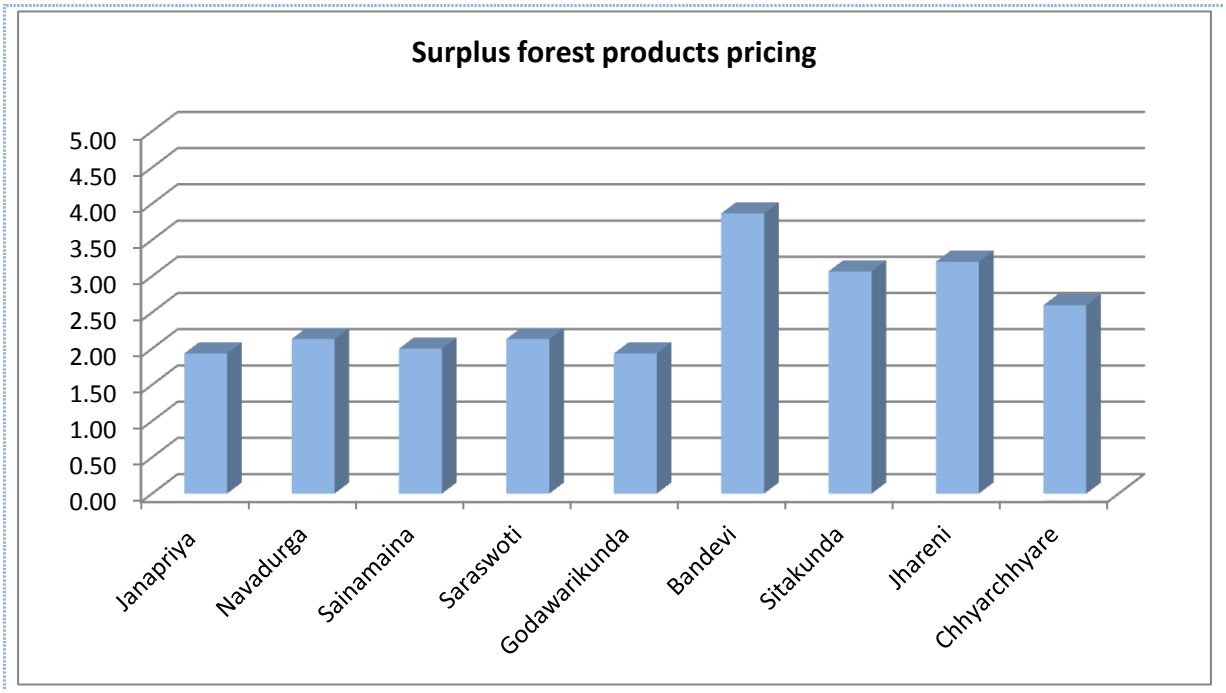
Figure 7-5 Respondents' views on time management of meetings (including the general assembly). Numeric score in Y-axis represents efficiency of time management (5, on time and very efficient and, 1, unmanaged time and very inefficient) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid hills(middle) and High mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.2.6 SURPLUS FOREST PRODUCT PRICING AND SALE

Community forests generate multiple products and services which can be utilised by the members of a CFUG as per approved operational plans. In many cases, CFUGs generate surplus forest products that can be sold to others within or outside the district. In some cases the timber and various medicinal and aromatic plants are sold to merchants from Kathmandu and other parts of the country. Usually, the CFOP outlines the pricing system and sale mechanism for surplus forest products but in many cases the executive committee makes the decision about the pricing system and obtains approval from the general assembly. In principle, surplus forest products should be sold at a high price so that the CFUG can generate revenue for forest management and local community development activities such as improvements to local roads, supply of drinking water and support to local schools. However, in many cases key personnel (i.e., executive members or local elites) influence the prices paid so that the products are sold to them at a lower prices enabling them to obtain undue benefits. Respondents' views on forest product pricing in the study CFUGs is depicted in Figure 7-6.

Many CFUGs (e.g., Godawarikunda, Sitakunda and Saraswoti) that perform well in terms of other governance indicators have a poor performance in regard to surplus forest pricing. In contrast, a poor performing CFUG on many governance indicators like Bandevi is perceived by its members to have a good performance on forest product pricing. An example of poor governance in the sale of surplus forest products is provided by the following interviewee:

I really don't know how the surplus timber is sold to outside users ... In fact we do not have sufficient timber for ourselves but the committee made the decision to sell timber to outsiders so that more revenue can be collected... The rate for CFUG users is much lower than for outsiders therefore the committee wants to sell to outsiders without fulfilling local demand... There must be some hidden interest to sell the product to outsiders so that they can get a commission during the auction... (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

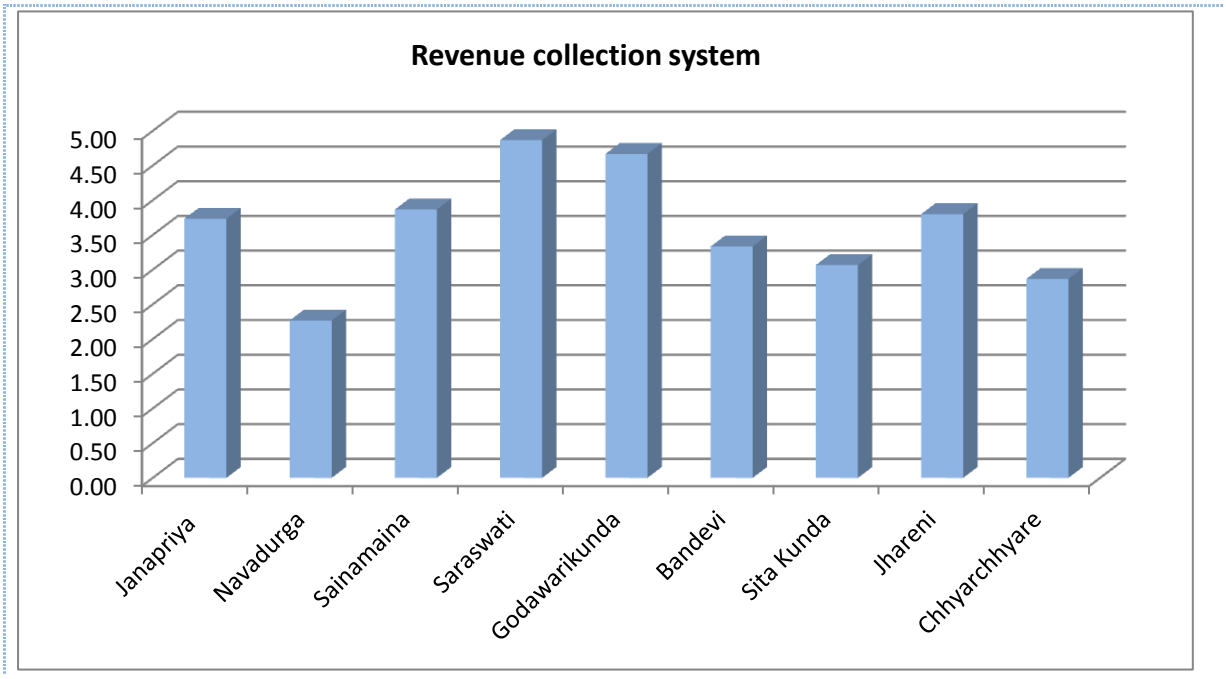
Figure 7-6 Respondents' views on the forest products' pricing system compared to the market price of the products. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the price comparing to prevailing market price (5, products sold at more than market price and 1, >50% below market price or given away for free) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.2.7 REVENUE COLLECTION SYSTEM IN COMMUNITY FORESTS

CFUGs generate revenues from the sale of forest products and services such as timber, fuelwoood, recreation and tourism. Many CFs charge entry fees to outsiders and they also fine people for non-compliance with CF rules and the unauthorised collection of forest products and services. The revenue generated from the sale of CF products and services and fines are to be deposited in a CFUG saving account which can be used for protection and management of the CF and community development activities. An executive committee will have difficulty enforcing its revenue collection system (e.g., both its sources and amounts) unless these are clearly stated in the CFOP and approved by the general assembly.

The perceptions of CF members of their revenue collection systems in the study CFs are shown in Figure 7-7. The results indicate that Saraswoti and Godawarikunda are perceived to have most efficient revenue collection systems while Navadurga, Chhyarchhyare and Sitakunda are perceived to have poor revenue collection systems. The remaining CFUGs were perceived to have a moderate level of revenue collection. According to one participant from the latter CFUG:

> I used to pay the annual fee in the first few years, but I stopped paying such a fee since the last two years. I did not see the proper use of our money. The Chairperson and Secretary control the financial resources of the CF. Many CF members, including myself, have asked them to clearly show the source of income and to detail the annual expenditure. However, they have failed to do so in spite of making commitments in each meeting (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

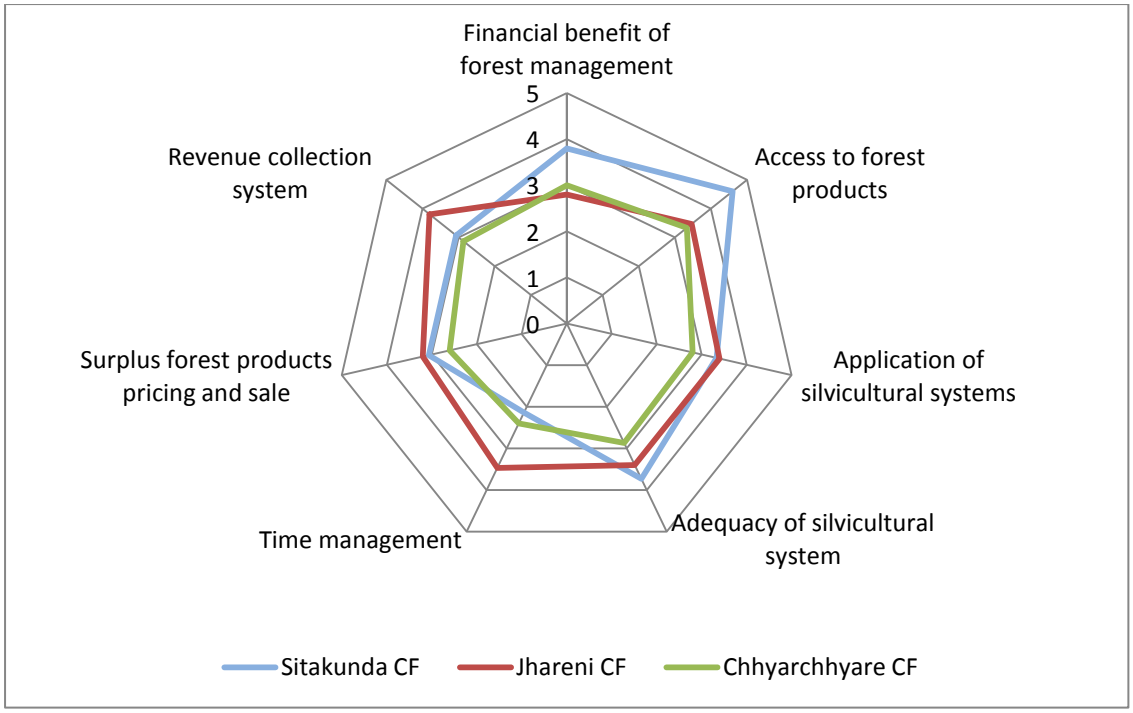


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-7 Respondents' perceptions of revenue collection systems from sale of forest products, fines and other activities. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the respondents opinion on revenue collection system (5, strongly agree on the CFUG has an efficient system for collecting revenues and 1, strongly disagree on the statement) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.2.8 CF EFFICIENCY IN HIGH MOUNTAIN – A CASE OF DOLAKHA DISTRICT

Respondents views on indicators of efficiency in Dolakha District assessed in this study are depicted by a radar diagram (Figure 7-8). Based on the seven indicators Sitakunda performs better than other CFUGs across the three indicators of time management, surplus forest products pricing, and revenue collection system. Jhareni CFUG performs better across the three indicators of financial cost/benefit, right to harvest forest products and adequacy of silvicultural systems. In contrast, Chhyarchhyare CFUG performs poorly across all of the efficiency indicators assessed in this study.

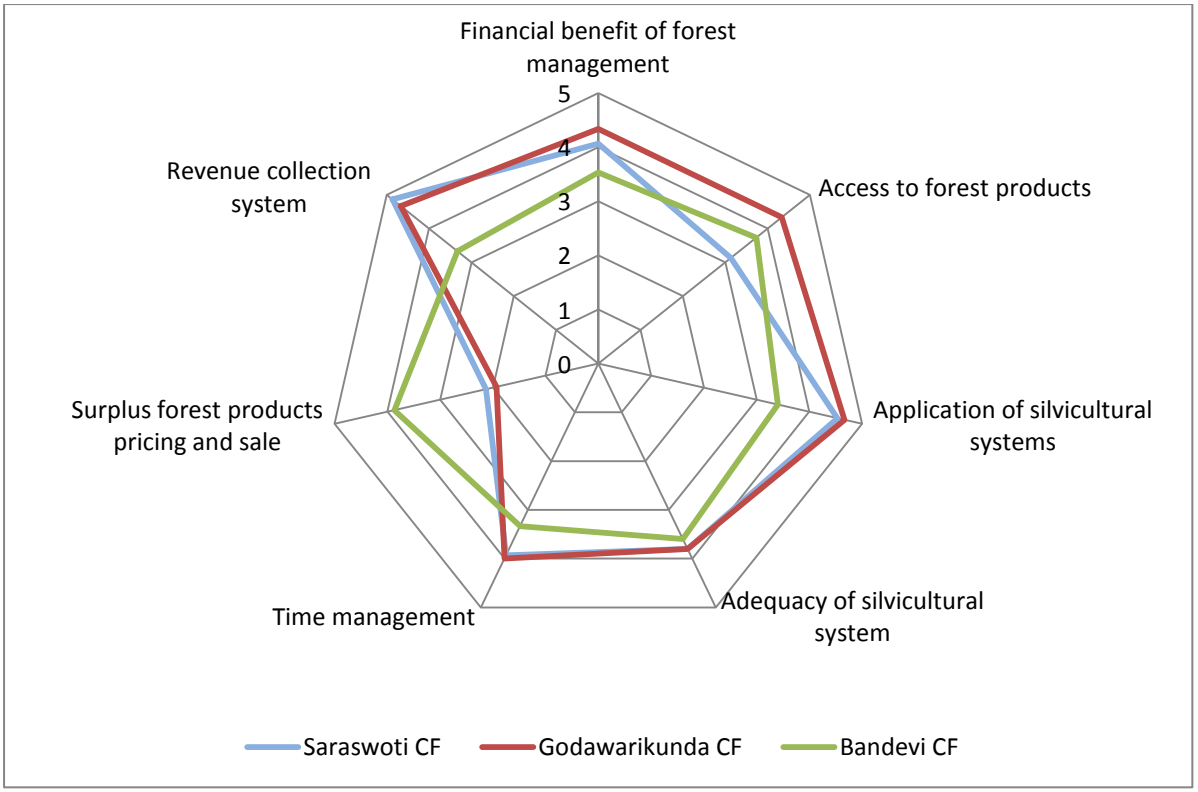


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-8 Status of efficiency in study CFUGs in Dolakha District.

7.2.9 CF EFFICIENCY IN MID-HILLS – A CASE OF LALITPUR DISTRICT

Results from the three CFUGs in Lalitpur district clearly indicate that one is performing well (Godawarikunda CFUG), another moderately (Saraswoti CFUG) and a third poorly (Bandevi CFUG) in terms of efficiency. Godawarikunda CFUG, one of the oldest CFUGs in the district, is located close to the district headquarters and Ilaka Forest Office from which it receives considerable support. The education level of CFUG members is high, with many having access to computer and internet facilities. In contrast, Bandevi CFUG performed poorly across the majority of indicators; however, it performed better on the indicator of surplus forest products pricing and sale. Bandevi does not have sufficient products to sell to outside users at this stage; however, their major focus is to fulfill users' demand.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

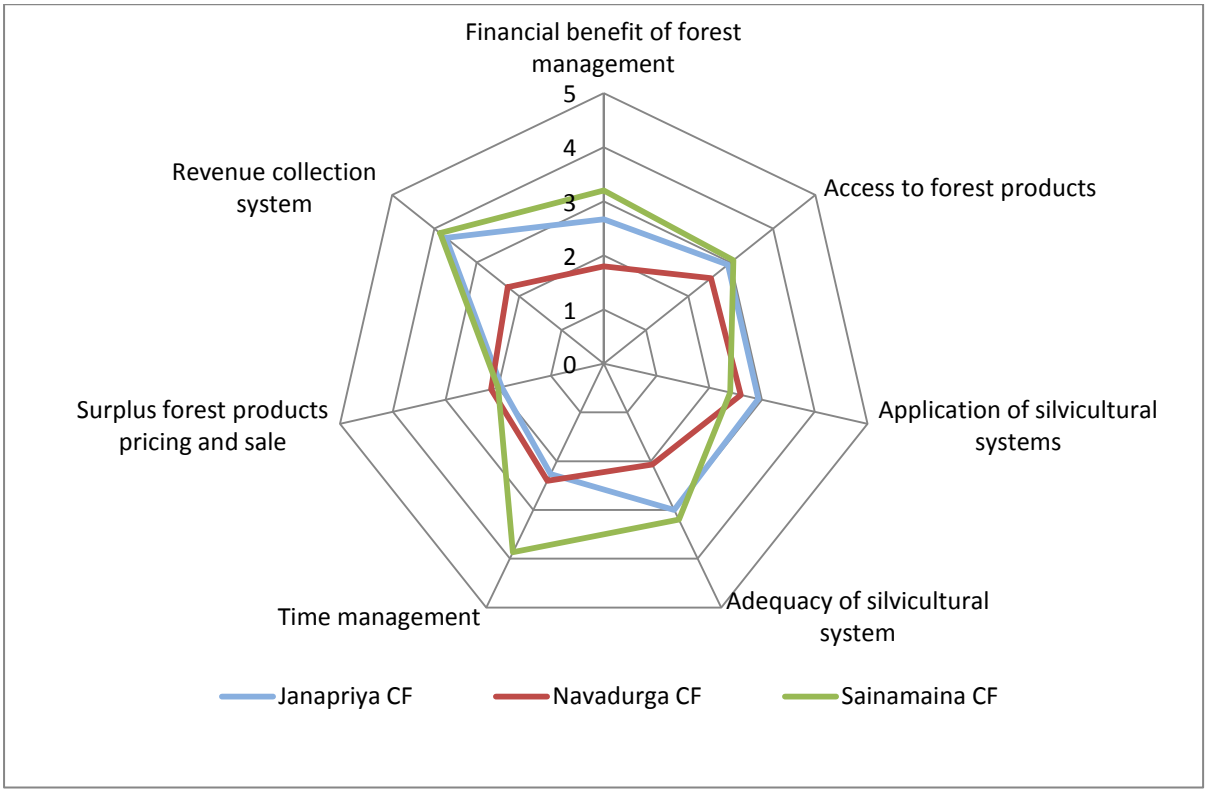
Figure 7-9 Status of efficiency in study CF in Lalitpur District.

7.2.10 CF EFFICIENCY IN TERAI – A CASE OF RUPANDEHI DISTRICT

Similarly to Lalitpur district in Mid-Hills, there is a clear distinction in performance across efficiency indicators across the three CFUGs in Rupandehi district. Navadurga was perceived to be functioning poorly while Janapriya performed the best among the studied CFUGs from the Terai Region. It is important to note, however, that the best performing CFUG in the Terai Region performs poorly compared to CFUGs of Mid-Hills and High Mountains regions. The key reasons for the perceived low level of efficiency in Terai are: a heterogeneous community, the behaviour of local elites including DFO staff, a relatively new CF programme, and level of support from DFO and project staff.

In the study CFs the forests were not mature or highly productive, resulting in users having less incentive to manage their forests. Conflict among users and also between the DFO and

the CFUGs also reduced efficiency. Users claim that they get little support from DFO staff, while the DFO staff members interviewed argue that the CFs have many irregularities in forest management and CF fund mobilisation. The CFs are also remotely located and the frequency of DFO staff visits is very low.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-10 Status of efficiency in study CF in Rupandehi District

7.3 FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

The concept of good forest governance is strongly related to that of fairness and equity in the distribution of costs and benefits and to procedural aspects that determine who participates in the definition of rules and norms. It is also related to how scientific information is used to make informed decisions (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011). Equity is a concept that has various

meanings and refers to ‘whether something is fair, just, or impartial’ (Poteete, 2004: 3). Equity issues in Nepalese community forestry sector are dynamic, have many dimensions, and occur at different operational and organisational levels (Luital, 2011). These issues are made more acute in Nepalese society as a result of historically and culturally constructed unequal power relations based on caste, class, gender and geographic region (RECOFTC, 2011).

Discussions about environmental governance reflect the centrality of equity to just and sustainable environmental outcomes yet lack clarity regarding how it can be defined and what its components are (McDermott et al., 2012). Promoting equity is an implicit goal of many initiatives including community-based natural resources management. However, it is often unclear which of the different facets of equity is being discussed. Is it equity in the distribution of costs and benefits? Or is it equity in the distribution between households within communities, or between local and national stakeholders, or between generations? Or, again is it a concern about fairness in decision-making processes? Without a clear definition of which aspects of equity are being considered and recognition of the problems involved in evaluating the impact of policies and programmes on equity, it is difficult to effectively assess it (McDermott and Schreckenberg, 2009; McDermott et al., 2012). The current dialogue around equity revolves predominantly around how it is measured. One view is that equity refers to increasing equality of opportunity, or equal access to services. Others argue, however, that equity should be measured in terms of substantive outcomes.

In this study equity is assessed using a variety of internal and external indicators that include CF fund mobilisation and use, subsidies to marginalised groups, benefit sharing, time allocation versus benefit sharing among users, equity in rules and regulations, and the forest product pricing system.

7.3.1 FUND MOBILISATION AND USE

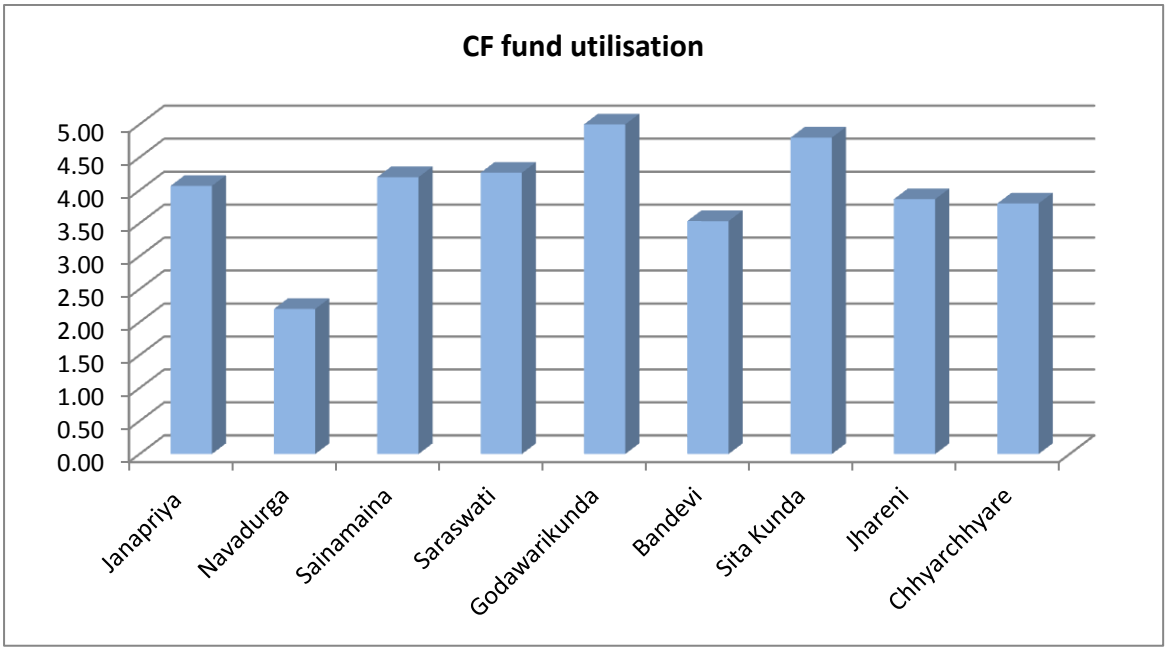
The mobilisation and use of CF funds is an indicator of fairness and equity within the group. Community forestry aims to create income generation opportunities and to promote local employment for poor and marginalised group members. The Forest Act (1993) and Forest Regulations (1995) and CF Guidelines (2007) all mandate that 35% of total income should be channelled to the benefit of poorest and most marginalized users of community forests for income generation and capacity building activities. Many studies argue that the 35% target is a basic and strong indicator against which one can evaluate the governance of any community forest. Many CFUGs do use their funds to support the poor and marginalised in income generating activities. However, in some cases, the funds are used to support elite members' interests such as in building roads, temples, and schools. These are not the immediate concern of poor and marginalized users and do not provide them much direct benefits.

Respondents in this study expressed a range of opinions regarding CF fund mobilisation as shown in Figure 7-11. The results indicate that Sitakunda (High Mountain) and Godawarikunda (Mid Hills) CFUGs have the fairest fund distribution mechanisms. Further, Janapriya and Sainamaina (both from Terai), and Saraswoti (Mid Hills), CFUGs have been performing moderately well with regards to fund distribution. As noted by one respondent:

> There is a fair income distribution mechanism in our CFUG. The Executive Committee presents details of income and expenditure of the previous year and an estimate of income and expenditure for coming year in the Annual General Assembly. In recent years, they have focused on special programs for poor, *dalit* and marginalised communities such as buying goats and piglets for income generation and providing skill training to at least five poor families in each year. The CFUG also provides a bursary for the education of the poorest users. I am happy with the decisions of Executive Committee and AGM in our favour... (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

In contrast, Bandevi CFUG has adopted an equal distribution system. Many respondents from Bandevi CFUG expressed the view that "development is for all, not for particular group". In another community, and in contravention of government rules and regulations, Navadurga CFUG is perceived by its members to have unfair mechanisms for fund distribution. One of the members of Navadurga CFUG expressed this concern as follows:

> Our CFUG has many provisions of fund collection such as annual fee from users, selling of forest products, and others. There is neither provision to invest CF income in poorest users nor a transparent accounting system. I do not know how much money is in CFUG's accounts or how the fund is allocated and used. The Executive Committee does not provide clear information or present audited reports at meetings and the Annual General Assembly. Many users have asked them many times for transparency regarding fund collection and utilisation. However, they have so far not provided detailed information (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-11 Respondents' views on mobilisation of CFUG funds. Numeric score in Y-axis represents respondents' views (5, fund is mobilised to wider community and special program for marginalised group and 1, fund is mobilised for the benefits of a few people only) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

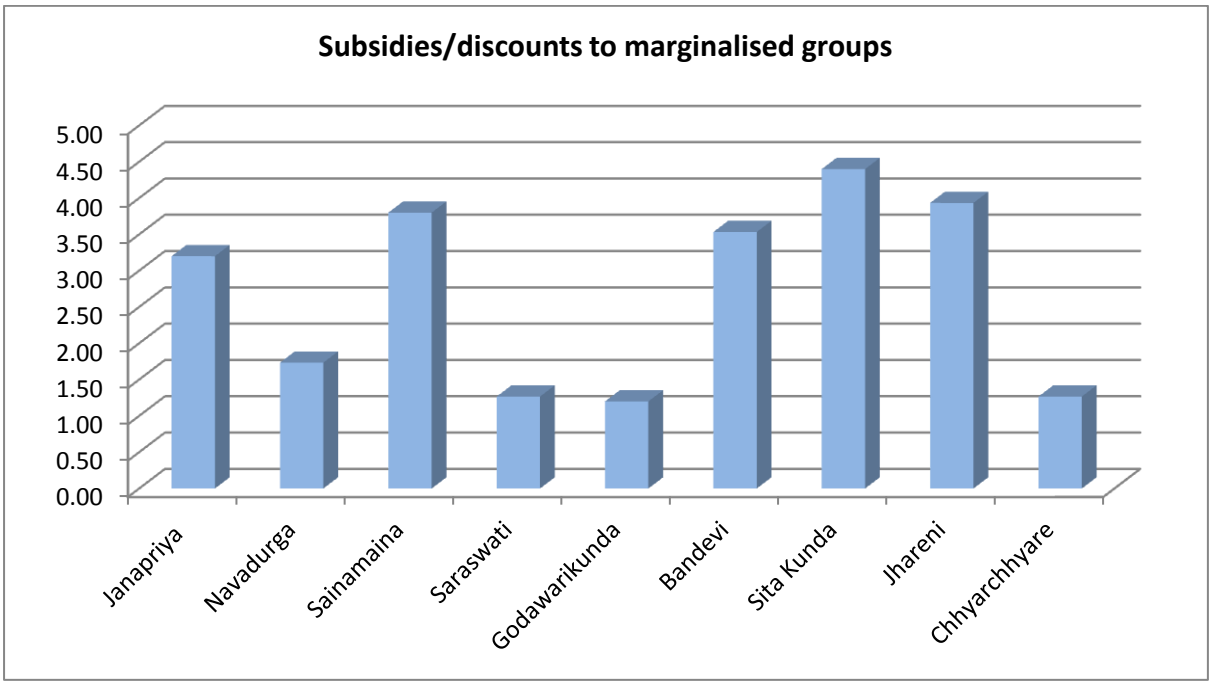
7.3.2 SUBSIDES/ DISCOUNTS TO MARGINALISED GROUPS

Poor and marginalised members of the community cannot afford the same price for forest products as wealthy members. Therefore many CFUGs adopt a different pricing mechanism based on the wealth ranking of CFUG members, while other CFUGs use an equal pricing system. The 2008 CF guidelines have highlighted the importance of providing subsidised products to the poor and marginalised groups as a basic requirement.

The contribution of community forests in providing users with basic forest products is quite variable across the nine study CFUGs. In general, most of the CFs are making a considerable contribution to meeting subsistence needs for fuelwood, leaf litter and small timbers. However, in a few cases, occupational groups like blacksmiths are experiencing difficulty as they are restricted in how much charcoal they can collect in violation of their customary use rights.

It is generally argued that well-governed CFUGs provide products and services to poor and marginalized groups at subsidized rates. However, in this study the respondents opinions show a very different result as summarized in Figure 7-12. Despite displaying very good governance across many indicators, Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs do not subsidise products and services to poor and marginalized groups. In contrast, Sitakunda, Jhareni and Sainamaina CFUGs are perceived to provide sufficient subsidies on products and services to marginalized groups. Bandevi CFUG does not provide funds to marginalised groups but does provide subsidies on products and services. A respondent from Janapriya CFUG reflects the views of those who support subsidies.

We provide timber at a subsidised rate to the poor people within our CFUG. We also give interest free loans to poor members of our CFUG when they request them. We provide firewood wood for religious ceremonies and *kajkriya* (cremation of dead body) (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-12 Forest product pricing system for marginalised groups. Numeric score in Y-axis represents respondents' opinion on subsidy/discount (5, respondent strongly agrees that the product is subsidised, and 1 strongly disagrees) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

The empirical results of this study show that it is not necessary to provide a subsidy for a CFUG to be perceived as well-governed and successful. If there is adequate transparency and wise use of resources, the poorest and marginalised CF members can also buy CF products and services at the same rate as other users.

7.3.3 FAIRNESS IN BENEFIT SHARING - PRODUCTS

Community forestry not only aims to meet a basic requirement for forest products at the local level but also to support the poor and marginalised members of the community(McDermott and Schreckenberg, 2009). Many researchers concur that community forestry practitioners must take proactive steps to advance equity (Buffum et al., 2009; McDermott and Schreckenberg, 2009; McDermott et al., 2013). Despite poverty reduction being an important goal of CF management, livelihood improvement is generally neglected in favour of improving forest management (Schreckenberg and Luttrell, 2009).

McDermott and Schreckenberg (2009) argue that poor and marginalised members of the community must first be identified so that community forestry groups and associated initiatives can avoid harming their interests and fairly target them for benefit sharing. In Nepal this is achieved in many CFs through a participatory wellbeing ranking, a mandatory step in the community forestry process (Schreckenberg and Luttrell, 2009). In particular, it is important to understand how poor people use forest products and services, the degree of their reliance on them, and the likely impact of community forestry activities (McDermott and Schreckenberg, 2009).

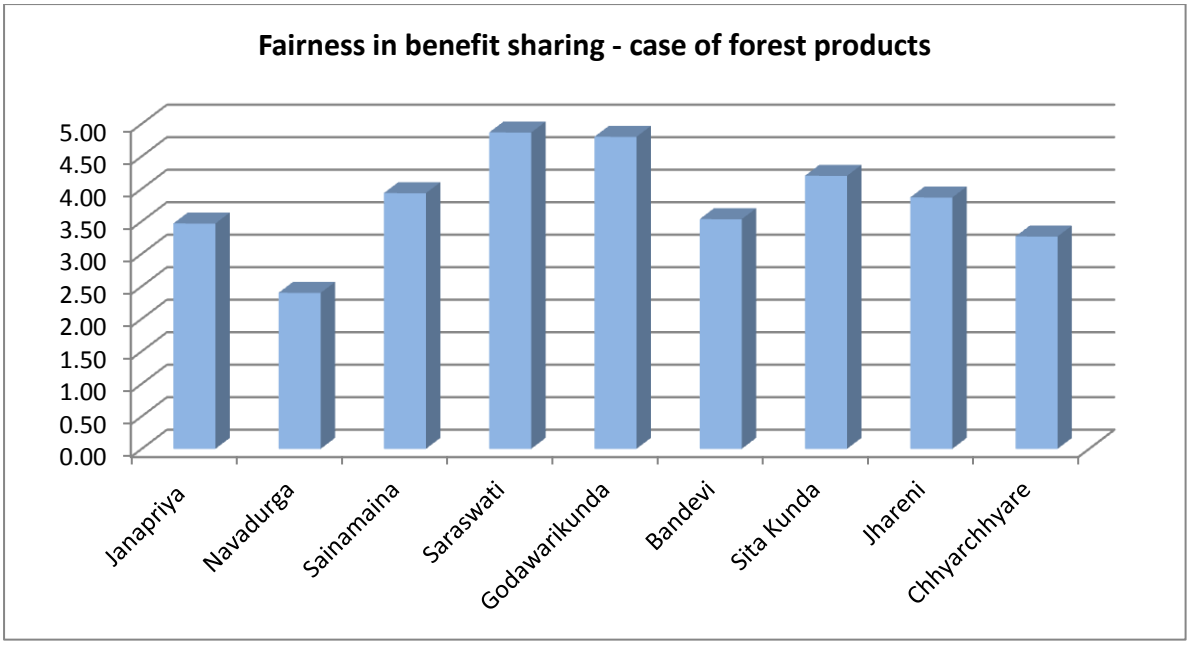
In many cases, community forestry is found to contribute to sustainable livelihoods of the CFUG members, including delivering essential forest products and services, enhancing natural capital, creating local organizations for collective action, contributing to policy reforms, and supporting income generation activities (Gautam, 2009; MFSC, 2013). It is considered by the authorities that the distribution of CF benefits is fairly equitable. The poorest and marginalized families obtain forest products and services to enable them to meet their daily basic needs because they do not have private forest resources for available. The

Nepalese government's prevailing policies and CF guidelines require all CFUGs to follow equity principles (CF Guidelines, 2008). However, in the field survey carried out during this study, respondents reported mixed results:

> Our executive committee members are not interested in the wider community benefits. They care about themselves and I can tell you that there is no fairness in benefit sharing. They [executive committee members] do not care about poor and marginalized group requirements and are prepared to take risks to get the resources for their own benefits. They are very selfish; they do not follow CF guidelines (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

> We have a fair benefit sharing mechanism. We give top priority to women and marginalized groups, we listen to their opinions regarding utilisation of forest products. The executive committee prepares annual plans based on the suggestions put forwarded by different interest groups so that everyone's interests are protected (Interviewee, Godawarikunda CFUG, Lalitpur District).

To assess the fairness of benefit sharing in CF, respondents' opinion on this issue were obtained and are set out in Figure 7-13. The results indicate that Saraswoti and Godawarikunda CFUGs are perceived to have fair benefit sharing mechanisms while this is not the case in Navadurga, Chhyarchhyare or Bandevi CFUGs. The remaining CFUGs report a moderate level of fairness in benefit sharing. The empirical results of the study show that those CFUGs that practice equitable benefit sharing are more successful irrespective of the physiographic region in which they are located.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

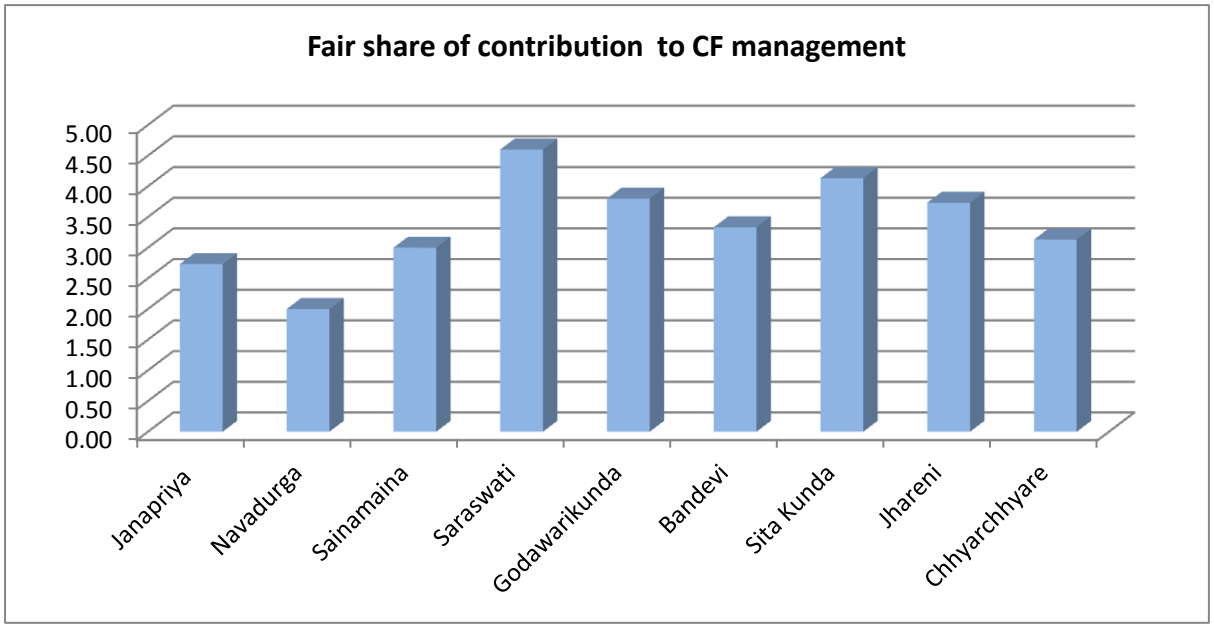
Figure 7-13 Respondents' views on the fairness in benefit sharing from the forest. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of satisfaction (5, strongly agree that the CFUG fairly shares the benefits and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.3.4 FAIR SHARE OF CONTRIBUTION TO CF MANAGEMENT

Community forestry provides a wide range of direct and indirect benefits to users, both local and regional. Users who contribute to forest protection and management expect a fair share from their in-kind contribution. Usually users are able to obtain benefits based on their contribution. However, many studies reveal that some forest user communities (particularly poor and marginalised groups) obtain a reduced quantity of forest products and other benefits from forests than they obtained prior to the forest being designated a community forest (Larsen et al., 2000; Malla et al., 2003). In short, in community forests the distribution of forest products appears to favour wealthier and higher caste households (Jones, 2007; Malla, 2000).

Figure 7-14 depicts the responses of participants regarding the perception of fairness of the distribution of benefits from CFs. Saraswoti, Sitakunda and Godawarikunda CFUGs are perceived to provide a better share of users' contributions than Navadurga, Janapriya and Sainamaina CFUGs from the Terai Region, which perform poorly on this indicator. A very pessimistic view was expressed by a respondent from the Janapriya CFUG:

> I argue that we are not receiving the benefits based on our contribution. To give you a simple example, while every household is involved equally in CF protection and management activities, we get less say and enjoy fewer benefits compared to the *Thulathalu* (elites). The rich and elite members have control of our CFUG, as they are head of the CF and make decisions for their benefit. We contribute CF activities to obtain forest products required for our daily use but the executive committee is interested in selling forest products to outsiders to collect revenue that can be utilised for their own benefits... No matter who manages forests we poor are always poor and no one listens to our voice (Interviewee, Janapriya CFUG, Rupandehi District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-14 Respondents' views on the time allocation for protection and management of CF. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the respondents' response on whether he/she agree on 'the time allocated for protection and management is equally shared by all members, , level of rights to collect forest products' (5, strongly agree, and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills(middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.3.5 EQUITY IN RULES AND REGULATIONS

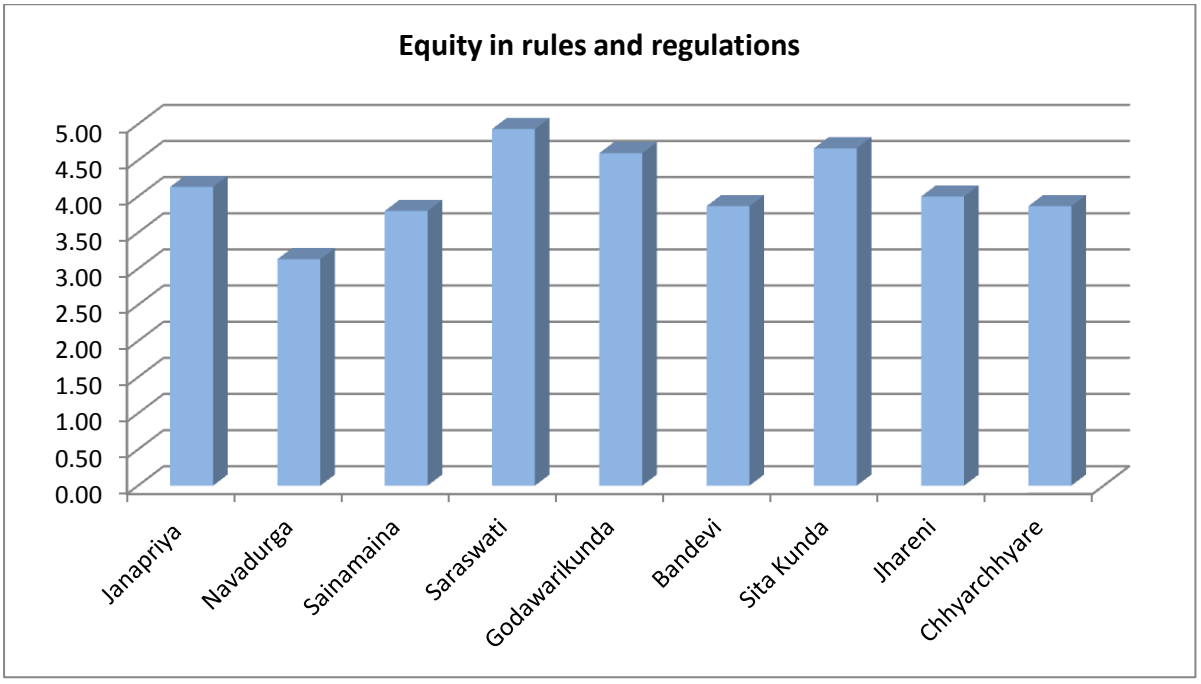
A distinction can be made between economic equity, which involves the distribution of benefits as discussed in previous sections, and political equity, which involves participation in decision making in the development of CFUG rules and regulations (Buffum et al., 2010). Many authors argue that political equity in user groups is an important prerequisite for economic equity (e.g., Agrawal and Gupta, 2005). Furthermore, the ability of community groups to express their ideas and concerns regarding rules and regulations associated with forest management is important to enhance equity (Mahanty et al., 2006).

It could be argued that CFUG rules and regulations should treat all CFUG members equally in decision making, implementation and benefit sharing and that well governed CFUGs provide equal opportunities for all members. However, the views of respondents in this study which are summarised in Figure 7-15 show a range of opinions regarding how equity is achieved or not through rules and regulations. A review of CFUG documents showed that Saraswoti, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs formally treat all CF users' equitably through rules and regulations and this is reflected in their perceptions of their performance on most of good governance indicators. Similarly, most respondents in the five remaining CFUGs except Navadurga perceived the CF rules and regulations were moderately equitable.

Despite performing poorly on most indicators of governance, users from the Navadurga CFUG expressed a moderate level of satisfaction regarding CF rules and regulations. However, results from the focus group discussions indicated that rule and regulation implementation is poor and ineffective, resulting in poor governance in Navadurga CF. As one respondent noted:

> We were not involved much in the preparation of CF rules and regulations during the preparation of the CF constitution and operational plan. The Ranger prepared our rules and regulations and he briefed us. While the rules and regulations of our CF appear fair, there is bias in implementation. The CFUG Executive Committee favours those they are nearest and social elites and they do not follow rules in our cases (Interviewee, Navadurga CFUG, Rupandehi District).

The empirical results from the nine CFUGs show that having good rules and regulations does not guarantee good governance in a CF, unless they are implemented without bias and equitably.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

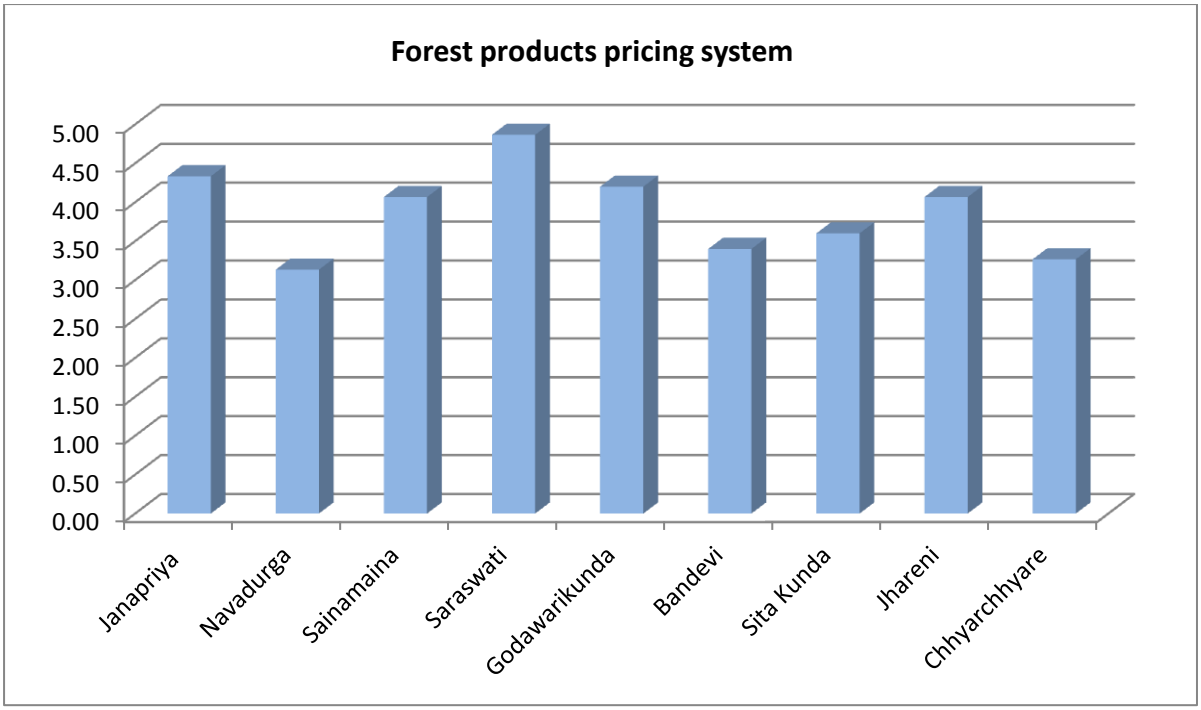
Figure 7-15 Respondents' views that CFUG rules and regulations are the same for all members including the marginalised. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of agreement (5, strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.3.6 FAIR AND EQUITABLE SYSTEM OF FOREST PRODUCTS PRICING

CFUGs can determine the prices they charge for different products in consultation with the District Forest Office. The price can be lower, equal or higher than the standard royalty rate. In some cases the CFUG can provide the products free of cost to poor and marginalised members of the CFUG. However in many cases, CFUGs use two different prices – one for the CFUG members which is lower than the royalty rate set by the government; and another for outsiders, which is usually similar or higher than the royalty rate. Sometimes CFUGs sell forest products by auction, which can fetch a much higher price than the royalty rate.

The respondents' opinions on forest products pricing system is summarized in Figure 7-16. Results showed members of Saraswoti, Janapriya and Godawarikunda CFUGs perceived the forest product pricing system is fair and equitable while users of Navadurga, Bandevi and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs perceived the pricing system to be less fair and equitable. One respondent stated:

> We have a very well-organized pricing system for forest products... The timber price is set as per the royalty rate, however other products such as firewood and leaf litter can be collected free of cost. Members of low socio-economic background can apply for a reduced price, with the committee making the decision as to whether it is appropriate... Usually they provide us products at 50% lower than actual price... In cases where the member is very poor or affected with natural calamities such as fire, the committee provides timber free of cost (Interviewee, Saraswoti CFUG, Lalitpur District).



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

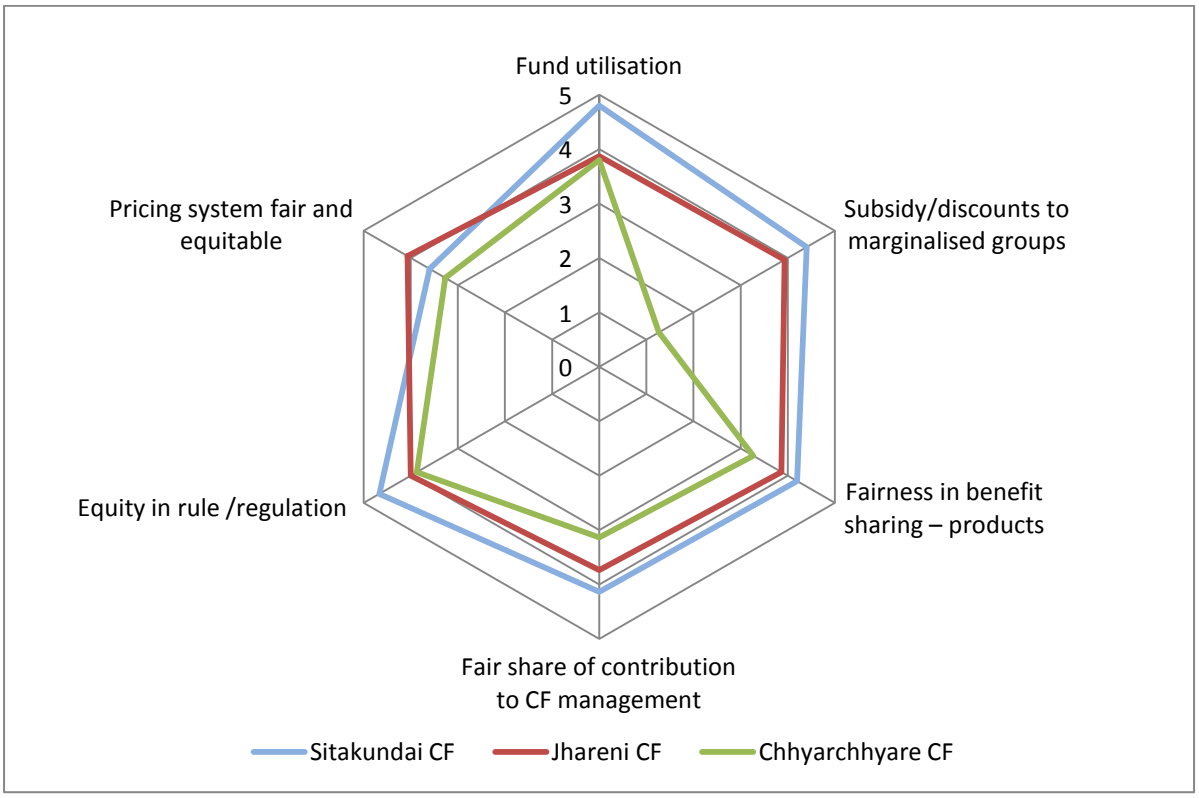
Figure 7-16 Respondents' views on fair and equitable forest products pricing system. Numeric score in Y-axis represents the level of satisfaction by respondent (5, strongly agree and 1, strongly disagree) and name of study CF located in Terai (left), Mid Hills (middle) and High Mountain (right) shown in X-axis.

7.3.7 STATUS OF EQUITY IN DOLAKHA DISTRICT – HIGH MOUNTAIN

Respondents' views on indicators of equity in Dolakha District are depicted by the radar diagram in Figure 7-17. The results indicate Sitakunda CFUG is perceived to be the most well-functioning CFUG followed by Jhareni CFUG, although the forest products pricing system in Jhareni CFUG is perceived to be fairer and more equitable. Similar to performance on other elements of governance, Chhyarchhyare CFUG is perceived by its members to be functioning poorly across all indicators of fairness and equity.

Informal discussion with various stakeholders and a review of documents showed that Sitakunda and Jhareni CFUGs have a relatively long history of CF management which

enhanced most of the indicators associated with equity. CFUG members have received numerous training courses and support from the Nepal Swiss Community Forestry Project, other NGOs, and the local CBOs. On the other hand, Chhyarchhyare CFUG has a relatively short history of CF management and there remains a lot for its members to learn. Furthermore, due to its small forest area, poor site quality and under stocked forest, there are limited opportunities to raise CF funds and the CF is not in a position to provide subsidies to marginalised members.

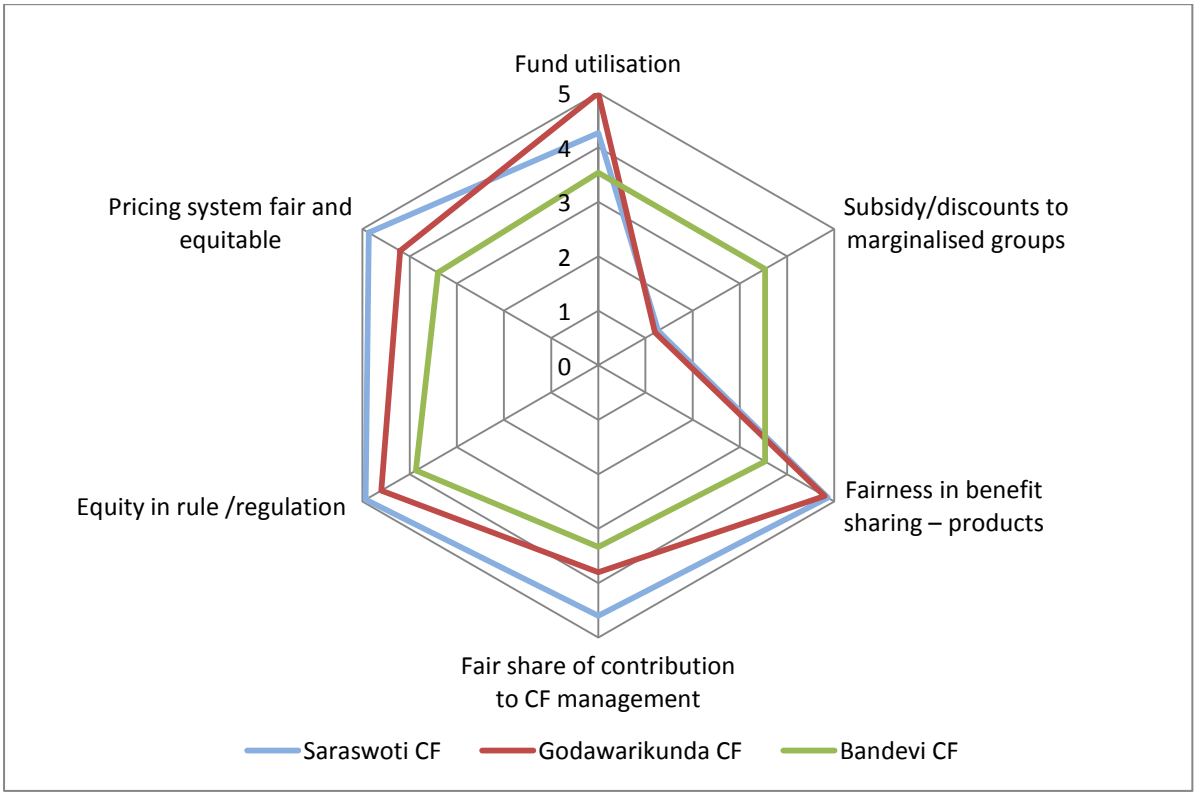


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-17 Status of equity in the study CFUGs of the Dolakha District

7.3.8 STATUS OF EQUITY IN LALITPUR DISTRICT - MID-HILLS

The results from the three CFUGs in the Lalitpur District clearly indicated Saraswoti CFUG is perceived to be performing well, Godawarikunda CFUG moderately and Bandevi CFUG poorly across the various indicators associated with fairness and equity. Saraswoti CFUG performs well across four of seven indicators assessed in this study. Godawarikunda, one of the oldest CFs in the district, performed better on one indicator, CFUG fund utilisation. The poorest performing CF in this district was Bandevi CF, which was perceived to perform poorly across all indicators except subsidies/discounts to marginalised groups.

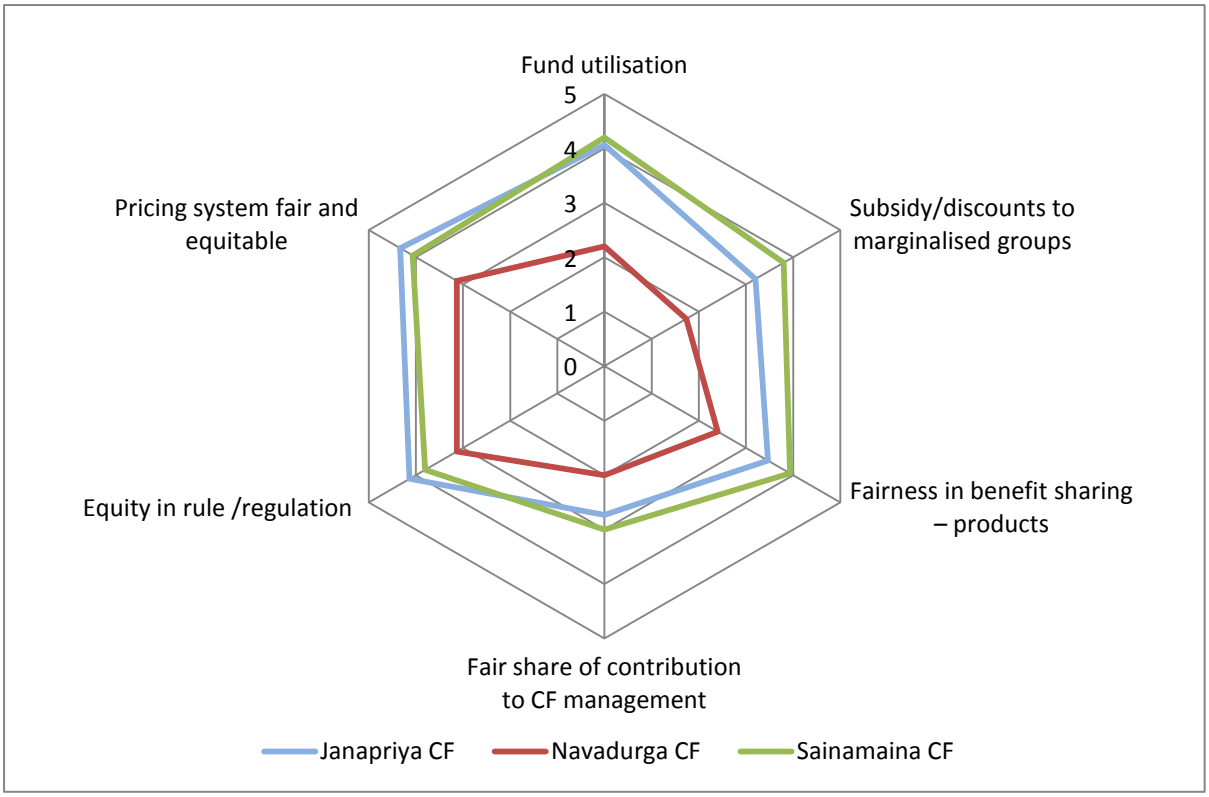


(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-18 Status of equity in study CFUGs of the Lalitpur District

7.3.9 STATUS OF EQUITY IN RUPANDEHI DISTRICT - TERAI REGION

Similar to CFUGs from the Lalitpur District in the Mid-Hills, a clear distinction exists between CFUGs on the various indicators of equity in Rupandehi District, Terai Region (Figure 7-19). Navadurga CFUG was perceived to be the poorest functioning CF across all equity indicators, while Sainamaina performed the best followed by Janapriya CF. The poor performance of Navadurga CF appears to be mainly due to its short history as a community forest and because it is run by *Madhesi* people who have a low level of awareness about CF management. The CFUG is perceived to be under the control of a few key people, who do not engage in a wider discussion with user groups.



(Source: HH Survey, 2013)

Figure 7-19 Status of equity in the study CFUGs of the Rupandehi District

7.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter assessed the performance of the nine study CFUGs on two important elements of governance – efficiency and fairness/equity – using a range of associated indicators. According to the literature community forestry can contribute to improved livelihoods of CFUG members in a variety of ways, including fulfilling necessary subsistence needs for forest products, creating local organizations for collective action, enhancing natural capital, contributing to policy reforms, and supporting income generation activities to poor and marginalised members of the community (Gautam, 2009; MFSC, 2013).

The study revealed that the government agencies and policy makers have given little recognition to local CFUGs of the big effort required in running, and the high economic cost entailed in managing, their community forests. The extra effort in time and cost to local people engaged in CF management is due to them receiving much degraded forests and young plantation at the outset, which has outweighed the benefits, received in terms of products and services and associated revenues.

The study results show that some CFUGs, such as Sitakunda and Godawarikunda, are utilising their funds to support poor and marginalised CF members with the aim of creating income generation opportunities and promoting employment to poor and marginalised group members. The understanding of the essence of community forestry is more developed in these CFUGs because of the internalisation of inclusive values and norms among members and executives members. However, in some other CFUGs (e.g., Navadurga) CF funds are being utilised in the interest of elite members to invest in road building and school construction. From the perspective of the poor and marginalised, these projects are not a priority and CF funds should be deployed to meet more immediate needs.

This study found that CFUGs from the Mid Hills and High Mountain regions perform better on equity than those in the Terai Region and this appears mainly due to the fact that CFUGs from the former two regions have a long history of management and have developed a better capacity to manage their CFs.

CHAPTER 8: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Within the context of a growing worldwide civic movement (WEF, 2013), recognition of the importance of local communities' involvement in sustainable forest management is ever increasing in developing countries. In this context, decentralization is often viewed as a means of promoting good forest governance; governance that is responsive to poor and marginalised people and adaptive to local needs. To be effective, decentralised governance relies on public participation, accountability, transparency and equity among other requirements. When appropriately implemented, decentralised, 'good' forest governance is expected to make local communities and community forest users groups (CFUGs) more independent and build their legitimacy. In this dissertation, I have examined to what extent, and how, decentralized forest governance is delivering enhanced economic, social and environmental benefits to communities. More specifically this study developed and tested a framework to assess how devolved forest governance is performing across the indicators of participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. The theoretical concept of 'environmentality' was employed to investigate local level governance through the lens of the theory of the commons, feminist institutionalization and decentralization. These three elements enrich each approach and provide a foundation for 'environmental governance' as discussed in Section 4-2.

This chapter synthesises the findings of this study, focusing on what we have learnt about how community forests are governed in Nepal and the implications and recommendations for the Nepalese government, donors and researchers interested in community forestry governance as well as for CFUG members themselves. Finally, the chapter reflects on the on the research methodology utilized, the study's scientific contributions to knowledge and some future directions for research on decentralised forest governance.

8.2 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

8.2.1 ASSESSING CF GOVERNANCE: FRAMEWORK OF ELEMENTS AND MULTIPLE INDICATORS

The quality of CF governance in Nepal was assessed using a framework composed of six elements and 36 indicators. These elements and indicators were developed following a review of the national and international literature on community forest governance and discussions with many key informants including government officials, CFUG members and CSOs. The framework was tested and refined in one of the study CF's before being deployed to investigate the general status of CF governance. The study revealed that the indicators are dialectically interconnected with performance on one framework element and associated indicators affecting performance across a range of other elements and indicators.

While the framework of elements and indicators was developed to assess CF governance at the community level, it may also prove useful in assessing governance performance in other natural resource management sectors such as buffer zone community forests user groups, soil conservation groups, leasehold forestry groups, collaborative forests user groups and community irrigation groups. The framework may also be applicable to other regions of

Nepal and other countries where community groups are involved in natural resource management. Further research applying the framework is required to assess the degree to which it is useful to examine these alternatives.

A summary table showing the performance of the nine CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal is shown below in Table 8-1. Out of nine, five CFUGs are well governed being high/very high performance (i.e., Saraswoti CFUG, Godawarikunda CFUG, Janapriya CFUG, Sainamaina CFUG and Sitakunda CFUG) and three of the remaining four being medium or medium/high performance (i.e., Navadurga CFUG, Jhareni CFUG and Chhyarchhyare CFUG) . Only one CFUG (i.e., Bandevi CFUG) scored a low performance. Although overall performance of Navadurga CFUG falls under medium performance the respondents have expressed their concern and dissatisfaction over the functioning of its executive committee.

Table 8-1 Summary of status of various elements of good forest governance in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			**Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)**			**Dolakha (High-Mountain)**		
Elements of governance	Janapriya CFUG	Navadurga CFUG	Sainamaina CFUG	Saraswoti CFUG	Godawarikunda CFUG	Bandevi CFUG	Sitakunda CFUG	Jhareni CFUG	Chhyarchhyare CFUG
Participation	High	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Low	High	High	High
Transparency	High	High	High	High	Very high	Very low	Very High	High	High
Accountability	High	Medium	High	Very high	Very high	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Effectiveness	High	High	High	Very high	Very high	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Efficiency	Medium	Low	High	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Fairness and Equity	High	Low	High	High	High	Low	High	High	Medium
Overall summary	High	Medium	High	High/Very High	High/Very High	Low	High	Medium/High	Medium/High

8.2.2 PARTICIPATION

Q1: Does decentralised forest management enhance community participation including the participation of women and other marginalised groups? If not what are the barriers and how can these be overcome? To what extent are 'marginalised groups' involved in CF planning and decision making processes? How do they participate in these processes? (Chapter 5)

Nepal's community forestry programme aims to strengthen the participation of marginalised communities, such as women, in the management of natural resources, an aim backed by policies, acts and regulations, and directives. The participation of users from all interest groups, indigenous communities, and members of various socio-economic status groups in CF processes can enhance the success of CF and promote good forest governance. As one of the key elements of good decentralised governance, the participation of all CFUG members, most especially women and marginalised groups, in various community activities and decision making process was critically analysed. To do this, five different indicators of participation were employed including women's participation, participation of indigenous communities, mediation between different interest groups, women and indigenous group participation in executive committees and consultation processes during preparation of CF constitutions and operational plans.

The research results are summarised in Table 8-2 and show that women's participation is increasing because of increasing awareness and, in some cases, the outmigration of men from rural areas. However, the study also revealed that the rate of participation, particularly functional participation of women and disadvantaged groups in decision making process, is very limited in most of the CFUGs in the Terai Region. In the Mid-Hills and High Mountain

Regions, the rate of meeting and general assembly attendance is comparatively higher but meaningful participation remains a challenge.

Because it is a major decision-making platform, women's representation in CF executive committees is important and can enhance community participation and ultimately improve forest governance. The empirical study showed that while most CFUGs fulfill the minimum conditions of prevailing acts, rules and regulations, their performance in terms of involvement and contribution of women to overall management of community forestry is comparatively lower than expected in many cases. Therefore, this study further concludes that the numerical representation of women and indigenous communities in executive committees alone is not a good measure of their participation and stake in decisions. In many cases, despite strong representation by number and position, marginalised groups are less well able to defend their interests and needs and are influenced by others. The study concludes that actual functional participation is essential as the level representation in committee alone is not enough capacity to influence in key decision making. The enhancement of the leadership capacity of women and other marginalised groups, via training and skills-development workshops, is key to improving governance in community forestry management.

Table 8-2 Summary of status of various indicators of participation of good forest governance in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

Indicators for participation	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF	Saraswoti CF	Godawarikunda CF	Bandevi CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyarchhyare CF
Women participation in CF	High	Low	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	High
Participation of indigenous communities	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Very High	Very Low	Very High	High	Medium
Mediation of different interest groups	Medium	Low	High	High	Very High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Women's representation in executive committees	Very High	Very Low	Low	High	Very High	Very low	High	High	Very High
Consultation of various interest groups	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Very High	Low	Very High	Medium	Medium
Participation in revenue collection	High	Medium	High	High	Very High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Overall Summary	High	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Low	High	High	High

The success of CF management depends on how the various contrasting and contesting interests are managed. A strong mediation mechanism is important as it enhances the overall performance in community participation in CF management. The study showed that only a few CFUGs have conflict resolution forums, where representatives from DFO and FECOFUN are invited into the mediation process. Effective conflict resolution forums need to be in place in each CFUG to improve mediation and, ultimately, enhance greater participation.

8.2.3 TRANSPARENCY

> *Q2: Are CFUG policies, procedures and activities transparent to all members? What can be done to enhance transparency in CFUGs? (Chapter 5)*

Transparency is the bench mark of quality of community forestry which can be guaranteed by allowing CF members and relevant stakeholder access to CF information, decision making processes and benefit sharing mechanisms. Many recent studies (see Pokharel et al., 2009 & 2011 for example) express a concern about transparency especially in terms of the availability of information, benefit sharing, annual auditing and reporting, this despite the internationally much-admired successes of Nepal's CF programme. Transparency and participation are complementary to each other. Promoting the participation of all stakeholders leads to greater transparency in community forestry processes. The study suggests seven indicators for assessing transparency of CFUG such as availability of information, extent of information accessibility, usefulness of information, annual reporting, auditing and reporting, comprehensiveness of reports, and decision making in benefit sharing.

Table 8-3 Summary of status of various indicators of transparency in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

Indicators of Transparency	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF	Saraswoti CF	Godawarikunda CF	Bandevi CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyarchhyare CF
Availability of information	High	Medium	High	Medium	Very High	Medium	High	High	High
Decision making in benefit sharing	High	Medium	High	High	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	High
Annual reporting	High	High	High	High	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	High
Auditing and reporting	High	High	Very High	High	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	High
Comprehensiveness of reports	Medium	Medium	High	High	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	High
Extent of information accessibility	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	High
Usefulness of information	High	Medium	High	High	Very High	Medium	High	High	High
Overall Summary	High	Medium	High	High	Very High	Medium	Very High	High	High

Forest managers, researchers and civil society actors are more closely linked with the local community in CF management through their access to CF information. This is one of their major concerns because they assess the level of transparency in CFUGs via the accuracy, regularity and quality of information they receive. The study reveals that, where access to information is good, the cohesion and coordination among CF members and with external agencies is also strong. The study supports the argument that access to information is one of the major concerns of CFUGs and a vital indicator to assess their transparency. Where access to information is provided, a CFUG tends to function well and cohesion and coordination among CF members and with external agencies is strong. However, when access to information is weak the credibility of the CFUG to members and stakeholders is damaged. Being a powerful tool, the information provided by a CFUG must be correct and useful to the CF users and relevant government authorities; when it is, it develops integrity among CF users and the executive committee as well as enhancing the CFUG's reputation with the district forest office and stakeholders.

Annual auditing and reporting is a mandatory component for CFs, offering a means to promote communication and improve transparency. The research shows that most CFUGs in the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions produce well-structured reports which are circulated to their stakeholders. However, CFUGs located in the Terai Region were found to be weaker in writing and disseminating reports. In addition, older, more established CFUGs such as Godawarikunda and Sitakunda produced higher quality reports compared to more recently established CFUGs such as Chhyarchhyare and Bandevi. The study found that the level of governance is higher in those CFUGs that evidence transparency in CF fund mobilisation and timely auditing (e.g., Sainamaina, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda) and that this is irrespective of ecological region. The quality, accuracy and regularity of reports reflect the motivation of office bearers and key CFUG position holders.

The study concludes that as CFs' develop and gain resources, the distribution of such resources to benefit the community becomes an increasingly important issue in CF management. Further, the key reason for participating communities to engage in CF activities is to share equitably in the benefits. The empirical result shows that a transparent decision making benefit sharing mechanism enhances community participation, which leads to CF success. Very high transparency has generated harmony among CF members in Godawarikunda and Sitakunda CFUGs; in contrast, the medium level of transparency has led to disharmony in Navadurga and Bandevi CFUGs. In line with many scholars argument, this study shows that CFUGs which maintain high levels of transparency in benefit sharing decisions are successful in building robust and well governed CF institutions that result in productive CF management practices.

8.2.4 ACCOUNTABILITY

> *Q3: How accountable are the actors that play a key role in managing CFs? Are they accountable to the users? If not, why not? (Chapter 6)*

The right of control over community forests rests with CFUGs, which is expressed through decisions made at annual general meetings. The AGM is empowered to take decisions within a national legal framework, including regarding how to make the community forest more effective and efficient. The AGM elects an executive committee which is empowered to implement these decisions and is accountable to CF members. In order to evaluate accountability, five indicators were identified: accountability of the chairperson and secretary to CFUG, accountability of executive committee to CFUG, accountability of office bearers

regarding decisions, the influence of external agencies, and the clearness of CF goals and targets.

Within a CFUG executive committee, the key position holders include the chairperson and secretary, and these are considered to play an influential role in making and implementing decisions. The study finds that CF success depends on how accountable these office bearers are. In some cases, the negligence of the chairperson and secretary caused failure and results in the CF having a very weak performance. For example, the level of accountability among key position holders and executive committee members is relatively higher in older, more established CFUGs such as Godawarikunda and Sitakunda; in contrast to Navadurga and Chhyarchhyare CFUG, where a medium level of accountability was identified. The study showed that accountability in CFUG increases with years of experience in CF management. In addition, it found that if the chairperson and secretary are active and accountable, then the whole executive committee is more accountable. In those CFUGs studied, there isa strong correlation between years of experience and accountability, where older CFUGs such as Sitakunda and Godawarikunda exhibit higher level of performance, not only in accountability but also in other elements, in comparison to the newly established CFUG such as Chhyarchhyare, Navadurga and Bandevi. The main reasons attributed to a lack of accountability appear to be linked to leaders' self-interested motives, which result in allegations of misuse of CF revenue and rent-seeking from the opportunities available from government and projects. Further capacity building and regular follow up monitoring by government and other stakeholders are key measures to enhance the level of accountability among CFUG members and executives.

Table 8-4 Summary of status of various indicators of accountability in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

Indicators of Accountability	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF	Saraswoti CF	Godawarikunda CF	Bandevi CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyarchhyare CF
Chairman and secretary accountability	High	Medium	High	Medium	Very High	Very Low	Very High	Medium	Medium
Executive committee's accountability to CFUG members	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Low	Very High	Medium	Medium
Accountability of office bearers for decisions	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low	Very High	Medium	Medium
Influence of external agencies	High	Medium	High	Very High	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Clarity of goals and targets	High	Low	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low	High	Medium	Medium
Overall summary	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Low	High	Medium	Medium

According to Nepal's prevailing laws, CFUGs are autonomous and self-sustaining institutions. They must be able to make their decisions themselves. Therefore, the influence of external agencies could be counterproductive to a good governance outcome. However, community forestry requires development and this is being facilitated by the efforts of many actors including international agencies and donors. Empirical evidence from this research suggests that increasing the contribution of external agencies such as DFO, FECOFUN, and other civil society organisations could actually enhance governance outcomes. For example, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda are two of the most successful CFUGs, but both have been highly influenced in decision making by external actors. Both CFUGs are influenced by donor supported forestry projects and government officials. The main reason for their superior outcomes appears to be due to synergy, interaction and cross-fertilization of knowledge between CFUG officers and members and other stakeholders.

8.2.5 EFFECTIVENESS

> *Q4: How effective is decentralised forest management in the form of community forestry in delivering economic benefits? What goods and services do people obtain from CF and how do they make decisions to distribute these benefits? (Chapter 6)*

The effectiveness of CF was assessed by developing five indicators: structure of CF operational plan and constitution, accomplishment of CF management objectives, implementation of meeting decisions and dispute resolution process.

CFUGs are expected to develop a standard constitution and operational plan with long-, medium-, short-term goals. The purpose of these documents is to guide executive committees and users in the work they do over the stipulated time period. In many cases, however, CFUGs do not follow their constitutions and operational plans; instead their work is based on ad hoc decisions taken by executive committees. Such decisions are also usually influenced by chairpersons and secretaries. The provisions of CFOPs are usually not implemented in practice due to bureaucratic procedures and delays in obtaining approvals from DFO offices. Those CFUGs that can exercise influence over their DFO offices, either by power or undue incentives, can obtain approval quickly. They often harvest more forest products than the annual allowable cut provided for in the CFOP.

It is generally understood that CFUGs prepare their own constitutions and operational plan providing an opportunity for a rigorous discussion about what forest management provisions should be included in CFOPs. In many cases, however, in the study CFUGs, the constitution and operational plans were prepared by forest rangers, supported by DFO or other donor-supported forestry staff, with CFUG members playing a minimal role. In some cases, forest rangers provided a copy of the plan to the CF chairperson or secretary which was then presented to the executive committee meeting. A review of the documents of sample CFUGs showed that all CFOPs and constitutions were in the same format supporting the claim that they are prepared by forest ranger and project supported forestry technicians. In the implementation phase too, undue influence from DFO staff hinders CFUGs from achieving management objectives, as for example in the recent ban to log green trees.

This study found that CF constitutions and CF operational plans alone are not sufficient to achieve such goals of community forestry. Regular meetings and discussions are found equally important as these help to breakdown the management objectives into achievable, time-bound outputs. Several CFUGs in the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions, such as

Saraswoti, Godawarikunda and Sitakunda, conducted monthly meetings and disclosed meeting decisions to all users and then worked to implement those decisions. In contrast, members of the Navadurga and Chhyarchhyare CFUGs seldom met and rarely implemented meeting decisions. They perceived that the reason for this poor performance was a low level of education and poor facilitation support from the District Forest Office.

The study identified the existence of several types of conflict including intra-group and inter-group conflict as well as conflicts between CFUGs and government regarding choice of management objectives and priority setting for development and distribution of benefits. Resolving such conflicts wisely and early paves the way to good governance and success in community forests. The amount and types of conflict varied according to ecological zone. It appears that the lower the altitude, the higher the conflict, with CFUGs in the Terai Region experiencing many conflicts and consequently having weaker governance outcomes. However, the study also shows that conflict is not necessarily bad providing timely and effective resolution mechanisms are in place to help the CF, a finding that is corroborated by other contemporary studies (Kanel, 2004; MFSC, 2013; Pokharel et al., 2009).

Table 8-5 Summary of status of various indicators of effectiveness in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

Indicators of effectiveness	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF	Saraswoti CF	Godawarikunda CF	Bandevi CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyarchhyare CF
Structure of CF operational plan	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low	High	Medium	Medium
Structure of CF constitution	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low	High	Medium	Medium
Accomplishment of CF management objectives	High	Low	High	Very High	Very High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Implementation of meeting decisions	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Low	Very High	Medium	Medium
Dispute resolution process	High	Low	Very High	Very High	Very High	Low	Very High	Medium	Medium
Overall Summary	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Low	High	Medium	Medium

8.2.6 EFFICIENCY

Q5: To what extent is decentralised forest governance efficient? (Chapter 7)

The research assessed how efficiently CFs are being managed. Seven indicators were used to assess efficiency: financial benefits obtained by CF users over time and costs involved, people's right to harvest forest products from CF, use and adequacy of silvicultural systems, time management in meetings, forest products pricing system and revenue collection system.

The study finds that government agencies and policy makers have given little recognition to local CFUGs of the time required in running, and the high economic cost entailed in managing, their community forests. The extra effort in time and cost to local people engaged in CF management is often due to them receiving very degraded forests and young plantations at the outset, which has outweighed the benefits received by them in terms of products and services and associated revenues. In addition, while the literature isdivided regardingthe pattern of access CFUG members have to CF resources (Kanel, 2004, MFSC, 2013), this research found mixed results. Some Mid-hills and High Mountain CFUGs where the forest was in good condition such as Godawarikunda and Sitakunda provide good access to resources in terms of harvesting and utilising forest products. In contrast, in CFUGs where the forest is in poor condition, like Chhyarchhyare and Bandevi, members are receiving very limited benefits.

Table 8-6 Summary of status of various indicators of efficiency in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

Indicators of efficiency	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF	Saraswoti CF	Godawarikunda CF	Bandevi CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyarchhyare CF
Financial benefit of forest management	Medium	Low	Medium	High	High	Low	High	Low	Low
Access to forest products	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Application of silvicultural systems	Medium	Medium	Low	Very High	Very High	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Adequacy of silvicultural systems	Medium	Low	Medium	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Time management	Low	Low	High	High	High	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Surplus forest products pricing and sale	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Revenue collection system in CF	High	Low	High	Very High	Very High	High	Medium	High	Medium
Overall Summary	Medium	Low	High	High	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium

Another component of the research on CF efficiency focused on perceptions regarding the use and adequacy of silvicultural systems. A rational silvicultural system should fit logically into the overall management plan, securing forest products and livelihoods based on sustainable yield. Despite such provisions in CF operational plans, many CFUGs have failed to employ appropriate silviculture systems to enhance economic output of CFs. Instead, they apply conservation oriented measures such as weeding, pruning, thinning and some selection seasonal felling. Moreover, untimely instructions and ban notices from the Department of Forests on the harvesting of trees in community forestry disrupts the application of appropriate silvicultural system, which requires the harvesting of forests products. This research finds that these actions by communities and government derail the CF objectives and hinders operational efficiency.

The study investigated the system used to price CF products. The results are discouraging as most executive committees have not followed the provisions of their operational plans. What happens is that they make decisions on forest product prices and later seek cursory approval from the general assembly. In the case of the Terai, it was found that local elites have influenced the price at which products have been sold and unduly personally benefitted. However, the system appears to be operating comparatively better in CFUGs in the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions.

8.2.7 EQUITY AND FAIRNESS

Q6: How fair or equitable are CF's benefit sharing mechanisms? Do all members obtain benefits equitably? (Chapter 7)

The results of this research highlight that fairness and equity are central in assessing CF governance and whether it is really benefiting those who are most in need and those who continue to struggle for basic livelihoods in a context of marginalisation and social exclusion. While promoting equity and fairness is an implicit goal of many initiatives including community based forest management, this study addresses its various facets: equity in the distribution of costs and benefits between households within communities, between local and national stakeholders, between generations and in decision-making processes. The study uses six indicators to assess the status of equity and fairness in CFUG decision making process. These are the mobilisation, use and outcomes of CF funds, the provision of subsidies or discounts to marginalised groups for forest products, the sharing of benefits, time allocation versus benefit sharing among users, equity in rules and regulations, and CF forest product pricing systems.

The CF users and other stakeholders are very concerned regarding the mobilisation and use of CF funds and this constitutes a good basis for evaluating CF's fairness and equity. The study results show that some CFUGs, such as Sitakunda and Godawarikunda, are utilising their funds to support poor and marginalised CF members with the aim of creating income generation opportunities and promoting employment to poor and marginalised group members. The understanding of the essence of community forestry is more developed in these CFUGs because of the internalisation of inclusive values and norms among members and executives members. However, in some other CFUGs (e.g., Navadurga), CF funds are

being utilised in the interest of elite members to invest in road building and school construction. From the perspective of the poor and marginalised, these projects are not a priority and CF funds should be deployed to meet more immediate needs.

CF constitutions, OPs and in some cases procedures developed by CFUGs normally contain provisions of fairness and equity, indicating that the equity aspects of governance has become institutionalised. However these rules and regulations have not been adequately implemented in practice. There might be several reasons for this gap between formal rules and implementation. First, the constitution and operational plan are often prepared by a forest technician rather than by CFUG members. Second, in many cases, the distribution of forest products is decided on, on an ad hoc basis, rather than by following the rules. In recent cases, and in spite of clear government rules and regulations, and provisions in approved CFOPs, the district forest office verbally instructed all logging operations to stop until further notice. This has created significant uncertainty over how to apply silvicultural systems in CFs, and the ruling is neither legally nor technically acceptable to local communities. The study concludes that such government actions are significantly disadvantaging local communities.

Table 8-7 Summary of status of various indicators of equity and fairness in the nine study CFUGs in three ecological zones of Nepal

Indicators of fairness and equity	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya CF	Navadurga CF	Saina Maina CF	Saraswoti CF	Godawarikunda CF	Bandevi CF	Sitakunda CF	Jhareni CF	Chhyarchhyare CF
Fund mobilisation and use	High	Low	High	High	Very High	Very Low	Very High	High	High
Subsidy/discounts to marginalised groups	Medium	Low	High	Very Low	Very High	Very High	High	High	Very Low
Fairness in benefit sharing - products	Medium	Low	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low	High	High	Medium
Fair share of contribution to CF management	Medium	Low	Medium	Very High	High	Very Low	High	High	Medium
Equity in rules and regulations	High	Medium	High	Very High	Very High	Very Low	High	High	High
Fair and equitable system of forest product pricing	High	Medium	High	Very High	High	Very Low	High	High	Medium
Overall Summary	High	Low	High	High	High	Low	High	High	Medium

Initially this research accepted the hypothesis that CFs with good governance would provide products and services to poor and marginalized groups at subsidized rates. However, the results of the study show that it is not necessary to provide subsidies for a CFUG to be successful, providing there is transparency in resource use and a focus on livelihood improvement programmes. This study has found that most of the CFUGs in the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions have been practising fairly equitable distribution of benefits. The empirical results also indicate that those CFUGs that practice equitable benefit sharing do so irrespective of physiographic regions.

8.3 COMMUNITY FOREST GOVERNANCE AND MARGINALISED AND ELITE GROUPS

Because of long term civil unrest in the country and the absence of local government at the village and district levels for the last 12 years, CFUGs are currently the only democratic institutions operating at the local level. Consequently, community forestry in Nepal is considered to be one of the best examples of decentralized forest governance in the world, contributing to relatively equitable, inclusive and pro-poor outcomes in practice. Nepal's legislation, policies and practices have since early 2000 emphasised the issue of social inclusion (Pokharel and Nurse, 2003), and provided for the identification of poor and marginalised groups such as women, *dalit* indigenous people and indigenous groups, the conduct of targeted CF programmes, and the use of CF funds for capacity building activities.

Table 8-8 summarises the overall empirical results from the survey and document reviews. The results clearly demonstrate that CFs have a significant positive impact by focusing on women and poor and excluded households and on the livelihoods of rural people, particularly in ensuring a sustainable supply of forest products and in increasing the voice of women,

dalit, indigenous nationalities and other disadvantaged groups in the governance of community forests resources. Furthermore, the researcher found in her field study that most of CFUGs studied had been practising inclusive governance by considering the importance of women, indigenous people, poor and *dalit* when making decisions. However, there were a few CFUGs that still exhibited poor performance either by providing minimal opportunities or shutting them out from community forestry decision making. The following sections discuss the role played by women, *dalit*, poor, indigenous groups and well-off people in CF governance in more detail.

Table 8-8. Analysis of inclusive provisions for women, dalit, and indigenous nationalities in constitution and operation plans (after MFSC, 2013)

Provision in CFUGs	Rupandehi (Terai Region)			Lalitpur (Mid-Hills)			Dolakha (High-Mountain)		
	Janapriya	Navadurga	Sainamaina	Saraswoti	Godawarikunda	Bandevi	Sitakunda	Jhareni	Chhyarchhyare
Representation of women, poor and excluded households in major posts of executive committees	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fund mobilisation for welfare of women, poor and excluded households: e. g., in health, education and income generation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Employment creation for women, poor and excluded households, e.g. daily wages and employment	yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Priority to women, poor and excluded households for training, workshop and study visits	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Cash incentives for women, poor and excluded households while attending meetings or participating in training and other development works	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Subsidy or no cost for poor and excluded groups for sale and distribution of forest products	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
CF land to generate income for women and poor	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

8.3.1 WOMEN

The study critically analysed women's participation as a component of good CF governance by focusing on the meaningful involvement of women in CF AGMs, executive committees and CF activities. The study found that there is a high level of female representation on CF executive committees and that this enhanced women's participation in CF activities. It was also found that female participation is increasing in all of the studied CFUGs because of increasing awareness of its importance. Further, participation in CFs has enhanced women's leadership over the past decade, as women are now occupying senior positions on CF executive committees. Such participation is making their voice stronger and more effective in the public arena. For example, a good example of female leadership is the Chhyarchhyare CFUG of Dolakha district where most of the executive members are women including the chairperson and secretary. In this context, the research finds that an important effect of CF is as a vehicle to mainstream women in development via participation in community forestry programmes.

The study found that the attendance rate of women at various CF meetings and the AGM is increasing. However, the functional participation of women in some CFUGs is weak. In some case, women are included on the executive committee to fulfil the minimum conditions of prevailing CF regulations. The participation of women in decision making is very limited in the Terai Region compared with the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions. For example, while women are included in the executive committee in the Navadurga and Bandevi CFUGs, their involvement and contribution to managing the community forest is minimal. In these CFUGs, male elites have captured the executive committee and influence decisions and

ignore women's voices, and arrangement that leads to further disempowerment and reluctance to engage in other CF activities.

Indeed, women are often in the majority at most general assemblies today because of high rates of male outmigration in search of economic opportunities. However, male domination of annual general meetings and executive committees is still found to be a main hindering factor for women in community forestry. This study indicates that there is a difference between nominal representation and effective participation in the decision making process. Although most women do not feel directly prevented from speaking and raising their concerns, many of them still feel that men do not listen to them.

In many cases men perceive women as having limited capabilities to make decisions and as seldom putting important agenda items and issues forward for discussion at meetings and assemblies. Such a male dominated discourse restricts active female participation and also restricts them in gaining leadership positions.

In summary, the study finds that participation, transparency, accountability and fairness in CF management is enhanced where women are in leadership positions and hold major decision making power. Given this, there is a need to further develop women's competency in managerial and leadership skills and this should be in a central focus of Nepal's CF programme to further enhance CF governance.

8.3.2 DALIT

Community forestry aims at mainstreaming lower caste CF users into all activities. Most of CFUGs investigated in this study have been initiating *dalit*-focused programmes to meet legal provisions and Nepal's CF Guidelines. The research found that participation of *dalit* in

management committees and their engagement in CF activities is increasing. CFUGs in the Mid-Hills and High Mountain regions are giving more emphasis to the inclusion of *dalit* in executive committees and other activities compared to CFUGs in the Terai region. In addition, most of the CFUGs are utilising part of their income to deliver special programmes to support *dalit* livelihoods. This study confirms that in many cases *dalit* members of CFUGs recognise that positive change has occurred in the last decade in CF governance.

The study reveals that the general provisions contained in CF legal instruments and CF guidelines for the inclusion of *dalit* in community forestry are insufficient to secure their interest and participation. The historical exclusion of *dalit* and disadvantaged peoples in Nepalese society is the underlying cause of their lower participation in decision making process. In addition, caste discrimination is still a major issue hindering *dalit* participation and preventing them from occupying leadership roles. Hundreds of years of social discrimination experienced by the *dalit* community are also reflected in community forestry decision making processes, which have led to *dalit* feeling inferior from so-called high caste people. This social and mental phenomenon among *dalit* keeps them from raising their voices effectively in meetings and assemblies. Most *dalit* CFUG members who were interviewed in this study stated they often feel that they are prevented by high caste people from participation and from standing for leadership positions in the CFUGs.

The research shows that most of provisions related to the inclusion of *dalit* in CF management and operations are not enforced properly to integrate them into mainstream decision making processes. Furthermore, *dalit* participants noted that have very little time available to participate in CF activities because they live from hand to mouth. Most *dalit* men work for daily wages and most *dalit* women do not usually participate in public affairs. Therefore, the research concludes that economic empowerment is a minimum condition to ensure *dalit* participation. Livelihood enhancement for *dalit* and marginalised communities

should be primary focus of CF programmes in the next stage, possibly via the transformation of traditional occupations into a modernised business model based on the forest products from the community forests.

8.3.3 INDIGENOUS NATIONALITIES

The role and stake of indigenous nationalities (ethnic groups), which refers to those who have been living in and around the forests, are recognised in prevailing government policies and guidelines and in the present practices in community forestry management. Initially, the CF programme created adequate awareness among indigenous nationalities regarding their rights and access to CF resources. Later, the inclusion agenda shifted from a narrow focus on community forestry to a broader one focused on development, and today it is a country-wide political agenda to include indigenous groups within the state as part of the restructuring process. Further, the government of Nepal ratified ILO Article 169 protecting the rights of indigenous people over their traditional lands, forests and other natural resources. However, there are still many unresolved, contested issues between indigenous and non-indigenous settlers over rights to geo-ecological regions and community forestry resources (MFSC, 2013).

The study finds that indigenous people contribute more to protecting and managing community forests than other caste groups because of their geographical proximity. As a consequence, they are well represented on executive committees and heavily involved in community forestry processes in CFUGs in the Mid- Hills and High Mountain regions compared to the Terai Region. Many specific provisions focusing on the rights of indigenous people have been included in CF constitutions and operational plans. These provide them

with extra access to resources and raw materials for traditional enterprises and include wild fibre for spinning and weaving free of cost or at a subsidised price. Furthermore, some CF funds are set aside for indigenous people, especially the poorest segments, for income generation activities to improve their livelihoods.

However, overall the rate of representation of indigenous people in leadership positions in CFs is very low, especially in the Terai region. Generally, CFUGs provide benefits to indigenous people as a welfare provision rather than as a right. Despite enabling laws and rules that assume equal access to decision making, the reality at the local-level is different and indigenous participation remains low.

8.3.4 LOW INCOME GROUPS

CF governance has focused particularly on the relationship between decentralization and forest management in the past (Larson, 2002; Colfer and Capistrano, 2005). The relationships between decentralization, management and livelihoods have been poorly addressed in CF management (Tacconi, 2007). However, there is a clear trend in the literature towards viewing decentralised CF governance as enhancing the contribution forests can make to poverty reduction (Sunderlin et al., 2005). Many previous studies have identified the positive contribution of CF in the improvement of rural livelihoods and poverty alleviation (Brown et al., 2002; NPC, 2002). Nepal's CF policy envisions using CF as a tool for poverty reduction by allocating CF income to targeted pro-poor programmes (PPP) or to members of low income groups.

This research finds that many of the CFUGs studied have initiated PPPs as income-generating activities. These income generating activities include soft loans, skills-oriented training for small business, and scholarships for children of the poorest members. Consequently, poor users funded from microfinance are engaged in various income generation activities such as goat keeping, pig farming, paper plate making, rope making and yarn from wild fibre.

Similarly, the empirical results of this study indicate that most of the study CFUGs have special provisions in their constitutions and operational plans to enhance the participation and improve access of poor CF users to community forestry products. These include the free supply of basic forest products (e.g., charcoal to blacksmiths and wild fibre to poorest entrepreneurs) and the provision of other forest products at subsidized prices. Some of the study CFUGs invite poor and disadvantaged people to participate in the pricing of forest products, while others have developed institutional arrangements that secure a fair distribution of benefits to the poorest community.

However, the results of the study reveal that CFUGs in the Terai Region are relatively less generous in their support of the poorest CF members. These CFUGs have designed very limited programmes which allocate limited CF funds to PPPs instead of adopting prevailing rules and guidelines. The degree of ownership experienced by the poorest of the poor was found to be weaker as result of lack of proper inclusion and poor CFUG governance. Therefore, intervention and support from external agencies is important as a catalyst and plays a vital role in enhancing the livelihood of local people.

8.3.5 ELITE GROUP

Community forestry has provided a venue for everyone including women, *dalit*, indigenous nationalities, disadvantaged groups and social elites to experience a form of democratic governance. This is important in a country that has undergone a decade-long civil unrest, leading to the absence of local government at the village and district levels. Because it is a grassroots level institution, CFUGs have become only the local institution for practising democracy during the conflict period. As a result, social elites have been attracted to CFUGs as they present an opportunity for community development and social leadership. Consequently, social elites often hold influential positions in executive committees and exercise control over CFUG resources. The empirical results of this research reveal that social elites have more access to CF positions and resources. Further, the research shows that democratic practice within CFUGs improved and became stronger than before with an increase in the inclusion of women and other social disadvantages groups. The new CF regulations and guidelines adopted inclusion provisions to reflect the greater awareness among women, *dalit*, indigenous nationalities and other disadvantaged members.

The results of the research indicate that there are many positive outcomes in CF management as a result of the involvement and strong leadership from social elites. In spite of occupying most of the executive positions in Godawarikunda and Sitakunda, CFUGs that have been managed by higher caste groups since their inception, these two CFUGs possessed better governance outcomes. The perceptions of members from most of the disadvantaged groups which included women, *dalit* and indigenous nationalities was that they were fully satisfied by the work of the executive committee. The main reason for this successful governance outcome was the use of participatory and transparent decision making processes, which

resulted in fairness and equity as well as respect for a dedicated leadership group that was perceived to manage the CFUG impartially.

On the other hand, elite occupy most CF executive positions and in some cases have been working to benefit their own groups. For example, Navadurga CFUG performs poorly across almost all 36 indicators used in this assessment of forest governance. The research finds that its Executive Committee works in isolation from the community and does not listen to users during the decision making process. The Executive Committee keeps most of decisions secret from general CF users out of a desire to favour elite groups. Monitoring by district forest offices and other stakeholders is very poor in these types of elite-dominated CFUG and a lack of awareness among general members regarding the rules and guidelines is one of the main reasons for poor governance. A number of other CFUGs such as Chhyarchhyare and Jhareni CFUGs of Dolakha District, also evidence poor CF governance even though they have more inclusive leadership with appropriate representation from diverse interest groups. In this case, it appears that the capacity of executive members in terms of managerial and networking skills was comparatively weaker than better performing CFUGs.

The study concludes that experience in CF management and degree of institutional support is key elements that contribute to improved governance in CFUGs. Elite control over leadership positions will decline over time as a consequence of growing awareness amongst the wider membership. An awareness campaign targeted at general users and a capacity building programme targeting women, *dalit* and other disadvantaged users should be the main focus to improve community forestry processes and, ultimately, CF governance.

8.4 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

This research shows that a combination of qualitative and quantitative data has been useful in investigating the quality of CF. The quantitative method employed constructed and analysed data regarding users' perceptions of governance across a large number of indicators supplemented with qualitative interview methods to provide greater understanding about internal CFUG governance dynamics.

The study was conducted using a stratified, purposive sample of nine CFUGs located in three districts representing three ecological zones (Bryman, 2001; Patton, 2002). Detailed information was collective and interviews conducted in 135 sample households during a specific time period. While the sample was selected to be representative of the diversity of CFUGs in Nepal and varied by ecological zone, distance from capital, and composition of members, it is possible the empirical results may not reflect the full range of variation in the country the country because of small sample size and limited coverage of research area. It is recommended that a larger, follow-up study be undertaken based on the current methodology using a larger sample size of CFUGs and a wider geographical coverage to verify the current findings.

The questionnaires employed for the in-depth interviews were translated into the Nepali language and the interviews were conducted in the local language. The translation of all the raw data from Nepali back into English was a time-consuming task. Before actually conducting the field survey, translated copies of questionnaires were tested in the field and, based on the results; a final set of questions was prepared. To ensure accuracy of translation from English to Nepali and back to English required a careful and repeated reading of the original interviews in order to interpret as accurately as possible what participants were

saying. To minimise inter subjective differences, the researcher was personally involved in all the data collection over two time periods and translated the entire date sets. Developing in depth understanding of study locations and collected data, the researcher could ensure the data collected, transcribed and interpreted accurately and consistently as stipulated by the research. However, such an approach would not be possible in an extended project, which would require the development of protocols to manage a research team.

8.5 MAIN SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS THESIS

Much of the literature on 'governance' is consistent with the view that it strengthens the market and private sector at an expense of public and community institutions. The empirical evidence from this research challenges this notion and argues that governance can also strengthen community institutions such as CFUGs.

This study fills a number of gaps in the literature on community forestry governance. The researcher reviewed and compared several models and frameworks used by international organisations such as World Bank and FAO and based on these approaches, synthesised a nationally applicable framework for assessing CF governance at the local level. Furthermore, a set of governance indicators was developed through a participatory process that involved a large number of stakeholders including CFUG members and policy makers; and then field tested in three ecological zones of Nepal. Finally, the study developed 36 indicators grouped under six elements and utilised them to assess the status of governance under each element. The CF governance framework developed in this study is likely to be applicable to other regions of Nepal and to other countries where CF management is in place.

The research also fills a gap in the literature regarding the role of external agencies and the impact of subsidies to the poor. In previous literature, the role of external agencies in general has highlighted a number of negative effects on CFUG governance at the local level. This research provides evidence that external agencies including governments, international and national NGOs, and donor agencies engaged in capacity building can have a positive impact on governance outcomes. With regard to the view that subsidies should be provided to poor and marginalised people as a general consideration, this research finds that subsidies are not necessary for a CFUG to be governed successfully, providing the programme is directed to the livelihood enhancement of poor people. However, transparency in resource use is a minimum condition of good CFUG governance.

Another contribution made by this study is in the methodological approach used, which bridges a conceptual and methodological gap in previous studies. This research shows that a combination of qualitative and quantitative data has been useful in the investigation of CF governance at the local level, while most of past studies have adopted only qualitative approaches. The quantitative methods used to construct and analyse data collected from individual interview regarding the presentation of status of governance through various indicators and qualitative methods provides greater understanding about the internal dynamics of governance in CFUGs. The conclusion is that employing only on qualitative methods is insufficient for a powerful analysis of CFUG governance, and the methodology adopted here will prove useful in further research in this sector. The methodology is not limited to the CF sector either, and could potentially be used to investigate the broader sector of natural resource management especially those programmes that employ a participatory approach. Contemporary literature on buffer zone community forests under protected areas management systems and participatory watershed management highlight the need for inclusive governance institutions. The methodology of this study could be adapted to

investigate whether and how these organisations perform in terms of participation, accountability and justice for the benefit of poor and disadvantaged groups.

This study adds to the critical literature on participatory approaches to assessing governance in community forestry, a literature that emphasizes the need to shift the understanding of social transformation through CF development practices that local community would be key intervening actors in order to assist the poor and other disadvantaged groups. This study focuses on the community forestry sector in Nepal, but the central question of this study deserves attention in other natural resource management sectors and other contexts. A focus on power relationships between people could enhance the ability of governments and community-based institutions to produce positive governance outcomes. More studies of particular processes of inclusive governance in this sector would be a critical step towards drawing more lessons and expanding the understanding of governance and rural livelihoods.

8.6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Based on the above findings, this study draws some policy implications for planners and policy makers regarding better management of community forestry. The study raised important concerns regarding the operation of decentralised forest governance at the local level. Evidently, a CFUG is a decentralised institution working at the local level and assessing its governance status through newly developed and clearly defined indicators has generated new insights with significant implications for governments, donors and other organisations supporting Nepal's community forestry programme. These research findings can be utilised to improve national policy for assessing CFUG governance as well as to

develop new strategies to improve the operation of underperforming CFUGs. The study suggests that there is great potential to achieve more effective user participation in the governance of CFs.

The study indicates that creating incentives to poor and marginalised people is not necessary and that instead policies should focus on enhancing their livelihood by changing the rules governing resource access and use. This policy should be pro poor and explicitly address the issue of power inequalities which has characteristically limited the participation and access of poor and marginalised group to resources and benefits from the practice of community forestry. The study suggests that one of the most effective policy measures to stimulate improved governance would be to strengthen poor and disadvantaged people's rights to enable them to obtain fair access to resources.

Based on the current experience of CF governance at the local level, the government should take measures to ensure greater participation of poor and disadvantaged groups in CF management. The concerned stakeholders—staff in District Forest Offices, civil society organisation and even donor agencies--should also consider inclusive governance even under the current policy framework. The policy should be targeted to the poor people to increase participation in each activity. The study stresses the need for a focus on securing greater deliberation within CF governance structures and decision-making process to enable poor and disadvantaged members to participate in resource and benefit distribution decisions and to enhance their participation in governance at the same time. The research also suggests that the widely shared mentality that external agencies exercise a negative impact on CF governance needs to be challenged. From this research, it is clear that external agencies such as government and non-governmental organisations as well as donor' agencies are having a positive impact on CF governance and playing a significant role in building capacity and enhancing the capabilities of CF users and ultimately improving the governance of CFUGs.

8.7 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In this study, 36 indicators were developed and tested in nine CFUGs of three ecological zones for assessing status of governance of community forestry at local level. To refine these indicators, further research is necessary in wider geographical and ecological settings in Nepal and other countries with similar approach of community forests management. In addition, the limited coverage of the current study-that is three out of 75 districts in Nepal means that there is an opportunity for a larger investigation into spatial variation of governance. The methodology also provides a means of assessing how governance arrangements are change over time, enabling regular assessments of CF governance progress. Repeated studies covering a wider area could enhance our understanding of local level governance and associated factors influencing it.

Community forestry has shifted remarkably from its original aim of securing basic needs for forest products and environmental conservation to one that now focuses on sustainable livelihoods. In the future, the growing and often conflicting demands from different groups for ecosystem goods and services will pose severe challenges to effective CF governance (Agrawal et al., 2008). To manage this conflict, community and market actors need to have a greater role in enhancing good forest governance.

This study was conducted in three ecological regions: High Mountain, Mid-Hills and Terai regions in Nepal. The community characteristics are different in the Terai Region where communities evidence a high degree of heterogeneity. Having a better access to roads, CFUG participants in the Terai Region access and use resources differently from those in the High Mountain and Mid-Hills regions, which poses problems in participation, transparency and accountability in CF management. A further, more detailed study of community forestry in

the Terai Region would provide a better understanding of the factors potentially leading to improved governance in Terai forests.

The research shows that formal and informal linkages between CFUGs and other groups and local government institutions such as Village Development Committee (VDC) and District Development Committee (DDC) influence the governance of resource use and alter the access of poor and marginalised people. The Local Self Governance Act (1999) of Nepal confers on VDCs and DDCs the rights to manage the forests and related resources. Under this provision, forest officials and CFUGs are required to work closely with local government institutions to plan and implement forestry-related activities including community forestry. Such linkages between CFUGs and VDCs and their influence to CF governance could further be researched for empowerment of CFUG members, better coordination and synergies.

Finally, while community forests have a potential to improve the livelihoods of the poor and disadvantaged people, more needs to be done to achieve this aim. Good CF governance is a minimum condition for this to occur. It is therefore, vital to continue research on various dimensions of CF governance to gain further understanding of how CF institutions can be strengthened and the livelihoods of the poor improved.

8.8 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Decentralised good forest governance has emerged to enable local communities and community forest users groups to better manage and utilise forests resources independently and with legitimate rights although the implementation of decentralization is not straightforward in many cases (see central hypothesis, Section 1.6). However, only a few

studies have systematically evaluated whether decentralisation actually generates good outcomes and the literature identifies many contradictions with CF governance at the local level. This research has addressed this gap in the literature and employed six elements (participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency and equity and fairness as pillars for good governance) to analyse the state of governance in decentralised, community forestry operations. More specifically this study has assessed community forest governance in Nepal at the local level and investigated how well current governance arrangements in CFUG are performing and whether they are meeting the expectations of local communities. To undertake this critical assessment of community forestry governance, 36 locally applicable indicators were identified, developed and tested in three ecological zones of Nepal.

As a result of this comprehensive study, the following broad conclusions can be reached:

- Despite the high expectations of policy makers and donor communities decentralized forest policy may not achieve equal participation of local people and poor and margilalised people who may be either excluded from major decision makings processes or from actively participating.
- The active role of civil society institutions (including NGOs and INGOs) is very important and they play a key role in various stages of CF process as well as assisting in conflict resolution.
- In contrast to several reports that claim that Nepal's CF programme is best implemented in the Mid-Hills region and is not suited to the Terai and High Mountain regions, this empirical study has demonstrated that geographic region is not a determining factor for good governance, which depends instead on a variety of other factors including users' interest, management capability and resource availability.
- In addition, while the influence of external agencies is often perceived to be counterproductive to CF governance outcomes, the results of this research suggest that the greater the contribution of external agencies the better the governance outcomes as a result of synergy, interaction and cross-fertilization of knowledge between CFUG operators and other external stakeholders.
- The study also identifies the need for governments to think through the consequences of regulation. Thus, despite CFUGs having rights over their forests, the recent ban on harvesting of trees in community forestry by the Nepali government has hindered the efficiency of operations and negatively impacted on the livelihoods of poor and marginalised peoples.
- It is a basic assumption that CFs demonstrating good governance will provide subsidies to the poor and marginalized in terms of access to products and services.

However, the study shows that this is not necessary providing there is transparency in resource use and a focus on programmes to improve livelihoods.

- A general conclusion of the study is that adequate consultation among different interest group enhances member participation and CF ownership. In contrast, a lack of consultation hinders overall participation and is a useful general indicator of poor CF governance.
- The study indicates that the amount and type of conflict that occurs within CFs varies according to ecological zone. Thus, CFUGs of the Terai region had many conflicts and these significantly weakened performances across other governance indicators.

This study also showed that the lower the conflict, the better were the governance outcomes.

Likewise, timely resolution of conflict results in better performance on the broad range of

governance indicators and signals more successful community forestry.

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ANNEX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

Decentralised community-based forest governance in Nepal: comparative study of three ecological zones in Nepal

Questionnaire for Interviews

Household ID:		Date of Interview:	
Name of Interviewee:		Name of CFUG	
Address: District:		Village/Ward No:	
Start time:	End time:	VDC/Municipality:	
Wealth-rank:	Rich ☐	Medium ☐	Poor ☐
Data checked by:		Data entry by:	

Part A: Household characteristics

(A household comprises people living together in the same house)

1. Gender of the Household Head (1 = Man, 2 = Woman)
2. Age of the Household Head:
3. Number of male members
4. Number of female members
5. Number of children (below 16 yrs of age)
6. Which ethnic group do you belong to? (1 = *Brahamin/Chhetri*; 2 = *Janajati*; 3 = *Dalit*; 4= *Madhesi*; 5= Others)
7. What are the major sources of household income?

   ……..……..……..

Part B: Inclusive Participation

Do all interested members of CFUG have an opportunity to influence decision making? (6 indicators, maximum score 30, minimum score 6)

8. What is your estimate of the percentage of women who participate in the general assembly of CFUG?

80-100%	☐,
60 -80%	☐,
40- 60%	☐,
20-40%	☐,
0-20%	☐

What accounts for the observed level of participation by women? (e. g., if women are participating extensively, what is the incentives that encouraged them to participate? If women are not participating extensively, what factors are hindering them from taking part in the assembly?)

Additional comments (if any): _ _ _ _ _ _ _

9. What is your estimate of the percentage of ethnic groups which participate in general assembly of CFUG?

All ethnic groups in the CFUG	☐,
60 -80% of ethnic groups in CFUG	☐,
40- 60% of ethnic groups in CFUG	☐,
20-40% ethnic groups in the CFUG	☐,
0-20% ethnic groups in CFUG	☐

Why are they participating or why not in proportion to their population/representation in the community?

Additional comments (if any): _ _ _ _ _ _ _

10. 'Different interests (poor, women, *dalit*) are well mediated at the general assembly of CFUG.' Indicate what extent you agree with this statement.

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly disagree	☐

How difficult/easy is it to mediate the interests?

Additional comments (if any): _ _ _ _ _ _ _

11. What is your estimate of the percentage of women who participate in the executive committee of CFUG?

50% or more	☐,
40-50%	☐,
30-40%	☐,
20-30%	☐,
<20%	☐

As per the recent community forestry guidelines, at least half of the executive members should be women. If it is less than 50% in this committee, what are the factors constraining the compliance of the guidelines?

Additional comments (if any): _ _ _ _ _ _ _

12. ‘Interest groups (poor, women, *dalit*) are consulted during constitution/management plan making and revision of CFUG.’ Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly disagree	☐

Can you provide an example of the ways used to consult with interest groups?

Additional comments (if any): _ _ _ _ _ _ _

13. ‘All CFUG members are participated in collection of revenue as agreed by the Annual General Meeting (financial participation).’ Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly Disagree	☐

If you strongly agree, why do you think financial participation is necessary?

If you disagree, why do you think financial participation was not necessary? (e.g., 'in kind' contribution was enough for sustainable management of CF?)

Part C: Transparency

Is information about the community forest and how it is governed reasonably available to all CFUG members? (7 indicators, maximum score 35, minimum score 7)

14. 'All CFUG information is freely available to CFUG members upon request.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you disagree, can you provide an example of when and what kind of information was not available?

15. 'Decision-making process of CFUG regarding benefit sharing (use of forest products) is clear and transparent to all members.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

How does the decision-making take place? (e. g. in-house discussion within committee? between the chairperson and secretary? the chairperson only?)

16. Are annual reports of CFUG submitted to relevant agencies?

Submission of annual reports to General Assembly and DFO ☐,
Submission of annual reports to General Assembly only ☐,
Submission of annual reports to Executive Committee only ☐ ,
Annual report known by key officials only ☐,
No annual reporting ☐

If annual reports are not being submitted to relevant agencies, why do you think that is?

17. Are required audits and reports other than the annual reports of CFUG submitted to the relevant agencies?

Submission of audit reports to General Assembly and DFO ☐,
Submission of audit reports to General Assembly ☐,
Submission of audit reports to Executive Committee ☐ ,
Audit report known by key official ☐,
No audit reporting ☐

If audits and reports (other than the annual report) are not being submitted to relevant agencies, why do you think that is?

18. 'Information in the annual report and other reports is comprehensive.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you think the information in reports is inadequate, can you provide an example?

19. To what extent is information of CFUF widely accessible to all its members?

Publicly available	☐,
Available to elite groups	☐,
Committee members	☐,
Key official	☐,
Only chairman and secretary	☐

If you think the information is not easily accessible to the CFUG members, can you provide an example?

20. To what extent you agree or disagree that the information available is useful format to the CFUG members?

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly Disagree	☐

If you think the information available to the CFUG members is in useful formats, can you provide an example?

Part D: Accountability

Are the key people and executive committee members accountable for their actions? (5 indicators, maximum score 25, minimum score 5)

21. 'The chairman and secretary are accountable to the CFUG.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly Disagree	☐

What do you mean by the accountability of position holders in executive committee? Why should they be accountable to whom? If you think they are less accountable than they should be, can you provide an example?

22. 'The executive committee is accountable to CFUG members.' Indicate what extent you agree with the following statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

What are the mechanisms to establish the accountability of executive committee to CFUG? (e. g., does it call CFUG assembly to take major decisions? Does the executive committee take it seriously and hold an emergency/immediate meeting if some CFUG members complain against some irregularities?).

If you think the executive committee is not accountable to the CFUG, can you provide an example?

23. Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement: 'Office holders are accountable for their decisions'

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you think office holders are not accountable for their decisions, why do you think that occurs? Can you provide an example of when such non-accountability occurred?

24. ‘Decisions regarding CF management is entirely made by CFUG and not influenced by external agencies such as government agencies or NGOs/INGOS.’ Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you agree, what are the agencies that influence the committee more strongly than CFUG or its members?

25. ‘The CFUG has clear goals and targets.’ Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you do not think the CFUG has clear goals and targets, can you provide an example?

Part E: Effectiveness

Are governance arrangements achieving the expressed objectives of CFUG members? (5 indicators, maximum score 25, minimum score 5)

26. ‘The operational plan is appropriately structured to achieve expressed objectives.’ Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,

Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you think the operational plan is not written to achieve the expressed objectives of CFUG members, please explain why and provide an example.

27. 'The constitution is appropriately structured to achieve the expressed objectives of CFUG.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.
    Strongly agree ☐,
    Moderately agree ☐,
    Agree ☐,
    Moderately disagree ☐,
    Strongly Disagree ☐

If you think the constitution is not written to achieve the expressed objectives of CFUG members, please explain why and provide an example.

28. Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement: 'The CFUGs objectives with regard to forest management have been accomplished'?
    Strongly agree ☐,
    Moderately agree ☐,
    Agree ☐,
    Moderately disagree ☐,
    Strongly Disagree ☐

If you think the CFUG's objectives are not being accomplished, please explain why and provide an example.

29. 'Meeting decisions are implemented and enforced.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.
    Strongly agree ☐,
    Moderately agree ☐,
    Agree ☐,
    Moderately disagree ☐,
    Strongly Disagree ☐

If you think the decisions of meetings are not being implemented and enforced, please explain why and provide an example.

30. Please rate your perception of the CFUG's dispute resolution process on a scale from highly participatory/consultative/win-win to coercive?

Highly participatory/consultative/win-win	☐,
Participatory and consultative	☐,
Medium participatory and consultative	☐,
Low participatory and less consultative	☐,
Coercive	☐

Part F: Efficiency

Does the governance structure of the CFUG minimise the waste of resources? (6 indicators, maximum score 30, minimum score 6)

31. Do the financial benefits of the forest management overweight the costs? Financial benefits of forest management in relation to financial cost involved?

Benefits considerably outweigh the costs involved	☐,
Benefits outweigh the cost	☐,
Benefits and costs are equal/ more or less same	☐,
Costs outweigh the benefits	☐,
Costs considerably outweigh the benefits	☐

If the financial costs of managing the CFUG outweigh the benefits, please explain why you think this is happening and provide an example.

32. The right to harvest/collect forest products compensates CFUG members for their in-kind contributions?

Very high level of right to harvest/collect forest products	☐,
High level of right to harvest/collect forest	☐,
Moderate	☐,
Low level of right to harvest/collect forest products	☐,
No right to harvest/collect forest products	☐

33. Do you agree that the "CFUG apply the silvicultural system as per approved management plan? "

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you strongly agree can you give an example of silvicultural system applied by the CFUG?

Shelter wood system ☐, Coppice system ☐, Selection system ☐, Thinning only ☐,
Pruning only ☐, Clearing only ☐, Silvicultural system not followed ☐,

34. How adequate is the silvicultral systems to deliver the objects of the CFUG?

More than adequate ☐,
Adequate ☐,
Moderately adequate ☐,
Less than adequate ☐,
Not adequate ☐

If you think inadequate can you explain why? And what will be sufficient to your opinion?

35. Describe your view of the time management of meetings (including the general assembly)

On time and very efficient ☐,
Good time management ☐,
Moderate time management ☐,
Low time management ☐,
Unmanaged time ☐

If meetings are poorly managed with regard to time, explain why you think that occurs.

36. Are the forest products from your CFUG sold at market prices or at a discount rate?

Product sold at more than market price	☐,
Sold at equal to market price	☐,
25% below market price	☐,
50% below market price	☐,
>50% below market price or given away for free	☐

If forest products are sold at a discount to the market price, why does that occur? Can you give an example?

37. 'My CFUG has an efficient system for collecting revenue (from the sale of forest products, fines for transgressions, etc).' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly Disagree	☐

If you view your CFUG's system for collecting revenues as inefficient, what could be done to improve it?

Part G: Fairness/equity

Are the benefits and burdens of the community forest and associated management practices fairly distributed? (6 indicators, maximum score 30, minimum score 6)

38. How is CFUG funds distributed?

Benefit to wider community and special program for marginalised groups	☐,
Benefit to wider community	☐,
Benefits to CFUG members only	☐,
Benefits to the selected groups only	☐,
Benefits to few people only	☐

If the benefits flow only to a particular group, why do you think this occurs?

Did you agree or disagree with the decisions that led to this distribution arrangement? (For example, if the money was invested in roads rather than drinking water, the benefits are captured by those households which have vehicles. In this case, the benefits are captured by the better-off at a cost of the worse-off)

39. Does your CFUG offer subsidies and discounts on forest products to marginalized groups (poor, women-headed households and ethnic groups)?

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If so, why are subsidies/discounts offered to these particular groups?

40. 'My CFUG fairly shares the benefits from the forest.' Indicate what extent you agree with the following statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

Describe how the benefits are shared in your CFUG? Are they 'equally shared'? Or the poor and disadvantaged get more than the relatively better-off households?

41. 'The time allocated for protection and management of the CFUG is equally shared.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree ☐,
Moderately agree ☐,
Agree ☐,
Moderately disagree ☐,
Strongly Disagree ☐

If you disagree, which group of people do you think contribute more to protection and management?

42. 'The rules and regulations are the same for all including the poor, *dalit* and women.' Indicate what extent you agree with the statement.

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly Disagree	☐

If you agree that the regulations are the same for all, do you think this arrangement is equitable? If you disagree, do you think the rules are biased towards or against poor, *dalit* and women? Can you suggest how it can be made more equitable and just?

43. Indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement: 'The pricing system used in the CFUG is fair and equitable'?

Strongly agree	☐,
Moderately agree	☐,
Agree	☐,
Moderately disagree	☐,
Strongly Disagree	☐

If you agree, why do you think it is fair? If you disagree, why do you think it is unfair?

44. Are there any other comments you would like to make regarding the operation of your CFUG that are not addressed in the above questions and that you think are important?

Thank you for your time and help.

ANNEX 2-1 INFORMATION SHEET FOR AN INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLD

Project: Decentralised Community-Based Forest Governance in Nepal

Information Sheet

Interviews

CFUG members and non-members

1. Invitation to Participate

You are cordially invited to participate in the research project entitled "Decentralised community-based forest governance in Nepal".

The researcher, Biddya Sigdel Baral, is a doctoral student of the School of Government, University of Tasmania, Australia. This research project is being conducted in order to fulfill one of the requirements for Doctor of Philosophy in natural resources governance. The researcher is doing her research under the supervision of Dr. Fred Gale and Dr. Joanna Vince, School of Government, University of Tasmania.

This research is open to participants who are NOT

- Pregnant;
- Under 18;
- Involved in illegal activities; or
- Cognitively impaired;

2. What is the purpose of the research?

This research compares and contrasts the forest resource management and governance system in 8 community forestry user groups from central and western Nepal. The research aims to investigate the relationship between forest governance, resource management and community outcomes in Nepalese Community Forest User Groups.

3. Why have I been invited to participate in this study

You have been selected into this study because you live in one of the eight Community Forest User Group regions being investigated OR have other expertise in community-based forest governance. The 8 chosen CFUGs reflect a diversity of community forestry types in Nepal: Terai, Mid-hills and Mountains. CFUG members and non-members selected into this research represent a diversity of household types based on forest user group membership/non-membership and socio-economic characteristics (male/female, rich/poor, ethnicity, etc).

4. What does the study involve?

The study involves voluntarily participating in an interview for approximately one (1) hour. The interview will employ a semi-structured questionnaire on such things as existing rules and regulations for forest management applied by your community forest user group, your participation in decision making and management, and access and benefits obtained. The interviewer will take notes during the interview and a transcript will be prepared. You will be given the opportunity to edit, retract, or add to any of the comments you have made.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the rights to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any time;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during your participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

The information provided by you will be used for analysis and interpretation. A summary of findings, written in Nepali, will be sent to your Forest User Group in about September 2013.

It is important that you understand that your involvement is this study is voluntary. While I sincerely hope you will participate, I respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation.

In accordance with NS 3.4.1, participants are advised that while data may have uses unrelated to the research project, it will not be released for such uses. If you wish to withdraw from the project, all data recorded up to the date of withdrawal will be destroyed.

5. Benefits from the study

This is an academic study and no immediate benefits from participation are anticipated. The study will inform the theory and practice of community forestry generally and in Nepal, especially with regard to the relationship regarding community forestry governance, forest management and community benefits. These results may feed into community forestry policy in the medium to longer term.

6. Photographs

As part of the process of documenting the structure and operation of CFUGs, the researcher will take photographs which may include images of individuals. Individuals in these photographs may be identified to illustrate aspects of CFUG operations. If you wish, you may exclude your image from inclusion in any photographs when you sign the Consent Form for the project.

7. Are there any possible risks from participating in the study?

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, if you find that you are becoming distressed, I will arrange for you to see a counsellor at no expense to you.

Interview transcripts and published results may be cited in reports and published articles. While every effort will be made to maintain anonymity, there is a slight risk that you could be identified from the character of your answers.

Interview transcripts will be kept confidential to the researchers. A copy of the transcribed interview will be forwarded to you for review and correction. Once the transcribed has been corrected and finalised, the data will be stored in secure place in the university's PhD student's electronic data storage system.

In addition, you may be identified from photographs taken of CFUGs designed to illustrate their structure and operation. As noted above, you will be able to exclude your image from use in pictures by ticking the 'No' box when signing the project's Consent Form.

8. What if I have questions about this research?

If you have any query with regard to this research, please contact me (Biddya Sigdel Baral) at the following addresses:

Researcher: Biddya Sigdel Baral

In Australia:

School of Government

University of Tasmania

Locked Bag 1340

LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Tel. +61 3 93634754

Email. Bsigdel@utas.edu.au

In Nepal:

C/O Dr Maheshore Dhakal**,**

Under Secretary,

Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation**,**

Babarmahal, Kathmandu, Nepal**,**

Tel. +977 -9851142405**,**

Email Maheshore.dhakal@gmail.com

You can also contact my supervisor and project Chief Investigator, Dr Fred Gale at the following address

Chief Investigator: Dr. Fred P. Gale

Senior Lecturer

School of Government

University of Tasmania

Locked Bag 1340

LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Tel. +61 (03) 6324 3376

Fax. +61 (03)

Email. Fred.gale@utas.edu.au

Please note that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on +61 (03) 6226 7479 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. Please quote ethics reference number [**H12757]**.

Thank you for your participation and support.

ANNEX 2-2 TELEPHONE CONTACT SHEET

Title of Project: Decentralised Community Forest Governance in Nepal

Telephone contact sheet

The following approach will be used to recruit individuals into the interviews and focus groups

Hello

My name is Biddya Sigdel Baral and I am contacting you because you are a member of the [insert name of Community Forest User Group].

I am undertaking this research as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Tasmania, Australia. My study focuses on how Community Forest User Groups in Nepal are governed and how governance arrangements influence the benefits receive by different social groups.

You have been selected at random from a list of members of the [insert name of Community Forest User Group] to be invited to participate in a [focus group or interview].

It would be very beneficial to my study if you were available to attend an [focus group or interview]. If you are, I will provide you with further information about the study and the [focus group or interview].

If the participant is willing to consider being interviewed/participate in the focus group, the researcher will then provide details of the study from the information sheet and, if the participant is willing to participate, schedule an appointment.

ANNEX 2-3 PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Decentralised Community Forest Governance in Nepal

Consent Form

Participant to read and sign

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.

2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.

3. I confirm that I am not

- Pregnant;
- Under 18;
- Involved in illegal activities; or
- Cognitively impaired;

4. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.

5. I understand that the study involves the following procedures: interviews lasting approximately one hour on the subject of my organisation's role in community forestry/decentralization and good forest governance.

6. I agree to be photographed during the interview/focus group. Yes ☐ No ☐

7. I understand that I may be asked to participate in a follow up interview.

8. I understand that the following risks are involved: low risks related to being misquoted and identified as the source of the comment. Such risks will be mitigated by (a) Circulating draft of interview/focus group manuscript for correction/elaboration; and (b) referencing your comments by sector, not by individual and by de-identifying interviewees by using letter/number system.

9. I understand that all research data will be securely stored in the University's secure storage system for five years from the publication of the study results, and will then be destroyed.

10. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

11. I understand that the researcher(s) will maintain confidentiality and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.

12. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.

13. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect.

14. I understand that, once I have had an opportunity to correct the record, that the information provided by me cannot be withdrawn, but that amendments, elaboration and additional information may be provided.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

☐ I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐ The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name: _____

Investigator's signature: _____

Date: _____